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Jack the conqueror

C. E. Bowen

Edward L. Harol
from his father

Jan. 1. 1870

Edw. H. Kirk

Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a signature or a short note, appearing in four lines across the center of the page.



Jack as Master of the Ceremonies.

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JACK THE CONQUEROR;

OR,

Difficulties Overcome.

BY

C. E. BOWEN,

AUTHOR OF "HOW PAUL'S PENNY BECAME A POUND" AND
"HOW PETER'S POUND BECAME A PENNY."

"RESOLVE WELL, AND PERSEVERE."



NEW YORK:
ROBERT CARTER & BROTHERS,
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P R E F A C E .



"RESOLVE well and Persevere," is a motto which, from its being that of her father's family, used constantly to meet the eye of the writer of the following little story, from childhood to riper years. As a child she often pondered over its meaning; as a woman she has observed its influence over the character and welfare of those who have put its principle into practice.

Hence arose the idea of the tale of "Jack the Conqueror," written

to show how great things even a child may effect by earnest resolve, if accompanied by energy and perseverance.

Some resolve well, but do not persevere at all in their efforts to attain an object. Others persevere for a time, but become discouraged by the many difficulties that meet them on every side. But those who, like "Jack," are never daunted by checks and hindrances, will generally find that success follows perseverance.

CONTENTS.



I.

	PAGE
Jack has his picture taken without knowing it. —	
A dragon-fly chase. — First thoughts about difficulties.	9

II.

Jack learns the value of a clean face and hands. —	
Spends his first money on soap. — Establishes a bath-room for himself. — Overcomes the first difficulty.	26

III.

Tells how Jack overcomes difficulty the second. — He pays for services done for him without money, but wants a shirt. — Jenny Fowler turns tailor. . .	38
--	----

I V .

Tea with old Jenny. — She makes Jack a present, and so overcomes difficulty number three. — Jack's way of study in Geography. — Castle-building. . . . 47

V .

Difficulty number four, a painful one to the feet, is overcome. — Jack makes a good bargain with Timothy Crawley, and for once pleases his aunt. . . . 58

V I .

Jack accomplishes his plan for learning to read. — Begins to wish to go to school. — His first lessons in the art of reading. — Sees that he must overcome more difficulties. 67

V I I .

Gipsies, baskets, and willow-twigs come to Jack's aid in dispersing his new set of difficulties. — In want of a workshop. — He takes possession of a mountain cave. 81

VIII.

Jack's success in basket-making. — A struggle with conscience, which reminds Jack that difficulties must not be got rid of at the expense of honesty. . . . 98

IX.

How to get willow-shoots. — A meeting with the 'squire and his daughter. — Jack's wishes realized. — Another difficulty removed. . . . 107

X.

Jack's handiwork is admired at the Hall. — He pays the 'squire a visit. — Undergoes a series of cross-questions. — Helping hands. . . . 118

XI.

Jack puts himself to school, and becomes his own benefactor. — He is entered as "Jack Harold, school-boy," endorsed, paid for, and acknowledged as such. . . . 127

XII.

Fresh troubles for Jack in quite a new form. — Jack's aunt objects to so much learning. — Thinks basket-making more profitable. 134

XIII.

Better times seem coming for Jack. — Thoughts about the quarries. — Mr. Sutton's plan for future proceedings. — Bed and board provided. 144

XIV.

Jack has to make an important choice. — The grammar school or the counting-house. — Jenny's advice and farewell. 149

XV.

Great changes related which years have effected. — Jack's subsequent history shows what may be effected by an "early resolve" to conquer difficulties. 155

JACK THE CONQUEROR;

OR,

DIFFICULTIES OVERCOME.



I.

Jack has his picture taken without knowing it. — A dragon-fly chase. — First thoughts about difficulties.

ON a daisy-covered grass bank near the village of Bushgrove lay, one fine summer's day, as dirty and poverty-stricken looking a boy as could well be found in any country place.

Poverty-stricken only, however, so far as his clothes were concerned, for nature seemed to take care of his limbs, which were plump and sturdy for his eight years.

Whatever he got to eat, and probably it was little enough, he seemed to thrive on it; and as for his keen, black eyes, they rivalled in lustre and beauty those of the spotted thrush that was singing so on the ash-tree just above his head, and any one, who has observed the bird in question, will agree that this is no small praise of Master Jack's two orbs.

He had apparently no greater object in life—certainly not at that moment—than to lie on his back, kick his heels high up in the air, and draw some pieces of long grass backwards and forwards between his two white, shining rows of teeth.

He had not the slightest idea that he was being looked at by any one, still less did he imagine that he was actually for the



Jack considering his prospects.

moment a little body of considerable importance in the eyes of a gentleman who was seated not three hundred yards distant from him.

But so it was, for an artist had chosen this spot for his sketch, and had seated himself behind a low, broken wall, in such a position that Jack came exactly into the foreground of the drawing.

With the dexterity and swiftness of a well-practised pencil, he transferred the figure of the unconscious child to his paper. Shoeless feet, ragged jacket, tumbled hair, —all were seized and prized as those articles had assuredly never been before, and were destined to figure in no less a sphere than the Royal Academy in London.

A splendid dragon-fly was all this time

flying round the field, settling first on one flower, then on another, but resting on none. Well was it for the artist that the boy was sketched before he came buzzing up, and gave a thundering rap on the side of Jack's nose. In an instant he was on his legs, and in pursuit of the glittering insect, which was always escaping by a hair's breadth from the bit of tattered straw, scarcely to be called a hat, which was ever and anon flung at him. So long did the pursuit continue, that the artist had closed his portfolio and put away his brushes before it was over. No difficulties seemed to daunt Jack's resolve to gain his prize. Out of one field into the next, back again over the hedge, through the ditch, into the centre of brambles and prickly

bushes, — all came as trifles to the eager boy.

At last, as if weary of keeping within reach, the dragon-fly flew high up, and settled himself contentedly on a large outside leaf of the ash-tree before mentioned. Not dreaming of further pursuit, he began to fold and smooth his wings, which had been once or twice discomposed by the touch of Jack's hat.

“He has got beyond you, my lad,” said the gentleman. “It would be no easy matter to catch him now.”

But almost before the words were spoken, Jack's keen glance had taken note of the branch on which the insect was perched in fancied security, and he had commenced climbing the tree with cat-like agility.

Then, creeping along the branch, he seized on the large, gossamer-like wings, and dropped to the ground with his unhappy prisoner.

The gentleman stepped forward. "Do not injure that pretty creature," he said. "I will give you sixpence if you will let it fly away again."

Sixpence was of more value to Jack than the dragon-fly; so he willingly agreed to the proposed bargain.

"What is your name, lad?" asked he.

"Jack Harold," was the reply.

"Have you no one to mend your clothes for you, and to teach you to like to be clean and tidy? Have you no mother or father?"

"Mother and father are dead; I've got



Jack's first Friend.

no one but aunt, and she don't care how I go."

"Then if I were you I would care myself. I was watching you all the time you were running after the poor dragon-fly, and I thought what a pity it was that a lad so sharp and active should look as you do. You are not always idle, I hope?"

"I've nothing ever to do," replied Jack, disconsolately. "I wish I had. Aunt won't send me to school."

"And so you cannot read or write? Well, my lad, I was as badly off as you once. I had no parents, and I was a poor boy; but I was as anxious to get on as you were to catch the dragon-fly. I conquered one difficulty after another, just as you got over the hedges and brambles, and so I got

on in the world ; and you will do the same if you are as resolved to succeed as you were just now. So remember, never be conquered by difficulties."

The gentleman walked away. He had to leave the village that evening ; but the intelligent face of little Jack would sometimes come to his mind as he was giving the final touches to the picture, which obtained honorable notice at the London exhibition the following year. He little thought what a commotion those few words of his had created in the boy's mind. Most lads would have heard them and never have given them a second thought ; but Jack had rather a peculiar little character of his own. He would lie on that bank often for an hour or two together,

thinking very queer thoughts for one so young. He wanted to know so many things that he didn't know, and had no one to tell him. The blue sky was a perpetual enigma to him, as to what it was made of. Whence the clouds came from, and where they went to, occasioned him many a wonder. He would watch a spider spinning her web, till, as it grew larger and larger, he became lost in astonishment as to how so tiny a body should be able to contain such an exhaustless supply of material.

Things which other children either did not notice, or took as a matter of course because they existed, were constantly subjects of wonderment to Jack, as he lay on a summer's day kicking his legs on

the bank. There seemed to him but one way by which his insatiable curiosity could ever be satisfied. *Books*, doubtless, contained answers to the hundreds of questions he longed to ask. If he could only read! But how could he learn without going to school? and to school he had not the slightest chance of going.

He had a very uncomfortable home. His only relative in the world, that he knew of, was the aunt who had grudgingly taken him when his mother died and left him an orphan. She was an idle, slovenly woman, always dirty and untidy in appearance, and her temper, naturally bad, had grown worse and worse every year. On poor Jack it was unreservedly expended. She had no affection for the boy, whom

she had only received at all because shame compelled her. Far better would it have been for him had he been brought up in the parish workhouse; but this, Susan Law did not choose to allow. She preferred seeing him in rags to having it said that her nephew was on the parish.

Her cottage was situated by itself, near some large stone quarries, which drew together a number of workmen, many of whom came from a distance every morning. She earned a scanty livelihood by warming their dinners, and taking one or two to sleep in her house. She intended Jack to go to work in the quarries as soon as he was old enough. In the mean time she saw little of him except when he came in to meals, or of an evening. There was

nothing for him to do at home; sharp words and often equally sharp cuffs on the ear generally met him there, so he kept away; but instead of getting into mischief, as would have been the natural consequence with most boys from such neglect, Jack's tendency was to spend his hours in the fields or woods, amusing himself in various ways, or lying still and speculating on the why and because of things around him.

Now there was a kind of education going on all this time, notwithstanding the fact of his being so entirely and utterly uncared for. His life in the fields was by no means without its lessons to a little mind thirsting for knowledge. He was, in fact, more advanced in intelligence than half the

children in the scattered village, who were going regularly to the day-school, and acquiring the power of reading, which always seemed so mysterious and wonderful a thing to Jack. The chance words that the stranger had spoken fell on soil well suited for them to take root in. They were words of hope and encouragement such as no one had ever used to him before. It had always been the fashion to look down on him as a ragged little urchin, dependent on a cross-grained woman, whom no one cared to have much to say to. Mothers did not encourage their children to associate much with a child who never looked fit to be seen; and, feeling a half consciousness that he was far from popular, Jack did not often obtrude himself on society in general, but rambled

about as we have said, perfecting himself in the arts of climbing trees, seeking birds' nests, catching butterflies, imitating the cries of birds, and puzzling over the whys and wherefores of things. If his life was rather a lonely one, it was far from unhappy; and, possessing a temper as sweet as his aunt's was sour, he was much less irritated by her constant rebuffs than might be supposed. But it had never been his lot to receive notice from anybody.

Bushgrove was a retired place, with very few of the better class of people living near, although the beauty of its situation occasionally attracted travelling artists to its vicinity.

Jack lay down on the bank again, when the gentleman was gone, to think over what

he had just said about his having been a poor boy once, but that he had got on because he had been resolved to do so. *He* a poor boy once ! why, he looked as much a gentleman now as did Mr. Sutton, the proprietor of the stone quarries, who had a large house near, and rode on horseback constantly. Yet he did not seem to be making fun of him at all, not even when he said that even he — Jack — might get on also if he were resolved to conquer difficulties just as he had got over brambles and hedges in order to catch the dragon-fly.

“Conquer difficulties.” These two words underwent a kind of parsing process in Jack’s mind. To conquer he knew meant to overcome ; to gain the mastery. So that if two parties were struggling together for

anything, the successful one was the conqueror. Now, in his case he was told that in order to get on he must "conquer difficulties." Therefore he had to take care that the said difficulties did not master him! But what were they? How was he to find them out? He was quite willing to begin the struggle if only he knew exactly how! Oh, if they would but rise up in some form, and say, "Here we are, conquer us if you can." If to scramble through brambles and hedges, or climb trees, would get him on in the world, then he should know what to do.

Books, — the secret of getting on must lie in them. If he could but read, he would soon find out; but *how* to learn, that was the question.

Isolated as was Jack, it seemed next to impossible to accomplish such a difficult matter. His aunt had given him a good box on the ears, the only time he had ever asked her to let him go to school, accompanying it with the information that he was an impudent rascal for supposing she would let him cost her any more than he did now, which was too much by half.

“I shall never be able to manage it,” sighed the boy; but, though he despaired with his lips, his mind went on working with thoughts as to how he could succeed.

II.

Jack learns the value of a clean face and hands. — Spends his first money on soap. — Establishes a bath-room for himself. — Overcomes the first difficulty.

THE sun was getting low in the heavens, the daisies were beginning to shut up their little round, white frills for the night, and the quarrymen were preparing to go away from work; — some of them were already descending the steep paths that led to the village below. These signs and Jack's own hungry stomach told him it was time to go home to tea.

As he was crossing a stile he met a girl

about his own age, who was carrying a basket in one hand, and leading her little sister with the other. Now, if Jack could be said to have a friend in the world, it was Mary Naylor. Not that he saw much of her, but she was always kind to him. She lived with her widowed mother, who was a very different sort of woman from Susan Law, Jack's aunt. She was in all respects as tidy and comfortable a body as Susan was the reverse, and invariably had a civil or kindly word for her neighbors. Her cottage and two children were always clean. A greater contrast could scarcely be imagined, than Jack with his torn clothes, tumbled hair, and not over-clean face, to the neat little maiden, in her lilac print dress and brown straw hat, under which the shin-

ing golden hair was so tidily arranged. Jack always felt pleased to meet Mary or her mother. With all their clean, nice appearance, they never seemed to look down on him, or to think him not worth speaking to. Mrs. Naylor had more than once given him a good slice of bread and butter when she had seen him passing her door, which he relished all the more because butter was a luxury seldom granted him, and because a nicely cut slice of bread fresh from the loaf rarely fell to his lot either. His aunt was in the habit of giving him any odd stale pieces that were left from her own or her lodgers' meals. These soaked in weak tea or skimmed milk were his usual breakfast and tea. No wonder that he thought Mrs. Naylor's bread and butter a treat.

Mary had her lesson-book in her hand, out of which she was teaching her little sister easy words of spelling as they walked along together.

“How do you do, Jack?” said Mary; “please will you lift this basket over the stile for me?”

“Yes, that I will,” said he, delighted to be of any service to her, however small; then, holding out his arms to the child, he offered to lift her over also.

But the little one clung to her sister’s frock, and shrank from him, exclaiming:—

“No, no; Jack is a dirty boy, and shan’t touch Nellie.”

“Oh, fie! fie! Nellie,” said Mary, coloring up, and much afraid lest her spoiled, petted little sister’s plain speech had hurt

Jack. "She did not mean to be rude," she said in an apologetic tone, "only she is so young. Please help me over," she added, hoping, with true native delicacy of feeling, to make up for what the child had said.

Jack held out his hand, and, as it took hold of Mary's fingers, he thought for the first time in his life how much nicer it was to have clean hands than dirty ones.

Mary walked on with her sister ; probably she reproved her for her rude speech to Jack, for he heard the little one exclaim in reply to something she had said : —

"But, Mary, Jack's face was so dirty."

Another wholesome lesson for Jack ; but he took it in good part, and sauntered on, thinking.

The sight of Mary teaching her sister had put a new idea into his head on the spot, and it was this. Suppose he could get Mary Naylor to teach him to read! She was well able, for she had learned for several years, and was often to be seen with her book; but then how could he ask her such a favor? How would her mother like it? Kind as she was to him, she had scarcely ever invited him into her house. Why, even little Nellie would not suffer him to touch her because his face was so dirty; and the strange gentleman had advised him to begin to care more about his appearance. Jack was not wanting in shrewdness; for no boy in the whole country possessed a larger share of that commodity; and it enabled him to see that

learning to read was not the first difficulty he had to overcome in finding out the way to "get on" in the world. He must begin by making himself look clean and respectable, and then perhaps he need not so much mind asking Mary to teach him to read.

"If only I could have a bit of soap," thought he, "a bit all to myself; for aunt won't let me touch hers."

And in truth when after tea he went into the little back kitchen, and began to use the small piece lying on the sink, she knocked it out of his fingers, and desired him to leave it alone.

"But I want to make myself clean," said poor Jack.

"Go along, then, and wash yourself in the river," was the reply. "You'll find

water enough there, and you must do without soap.”

The hint was not lost on Jack, however ungraciously given. He would go to the river, to a snug little shallow creek he knew of amongst some willow-trees. Why should he not use it as a bath every day? —but a bit of soap would be such a treasure, and it might be kept in some snug place where no one would see it if by any chance they went there. A bright idea struck him, and with a hop, skip, and jump, sent him running down the hill-side into the village. He halted at a little shop where articles of every description were sold.

“ Please, I want a piece of soap.”

“ How much ? ” asked the woman, pointing to some squares ready cut for customers

requiring small quantities of the article in question.

Jack chose one of the least of the pieces, and held out the sixpence which had been given to him that afternoon. He trembled lest it should not be enough; for it had never been his aunt's way to send him to make any purchases for her, and he supposed soap must be dear, as he was not allowed to use it. Greatly was he delighted, therefore, when he had threepence handed back to him.

"Anything else?" asked the woman; "doesn't your aunt want an ounce or two of tea to-day? I've some fresh just come in."

Jack shook his head, but his eye rested on some rough-looking pocket-combs, hang-

ing up in the window, and he asked the price.

“Threepence each.” Lucky Jack! The next minute he was in the street, his bit of soap in his hand, his comb thrust into his jacket-pocket. “Now for the river-side,” thought he, and thither he sped. The day had been sultry, and the cool water looked very inviting. The shallow place under the willow-tree proved quite as eligible for a bath as Jack expected. Never had his face had such a cleansing; and as for his hands, he scarcely knew them again. He had often bathed in the river before; but he had never known the luxury of soap, and its value was enhanced by the fact that it was his very own possession.

A towel would have been an accommoda-

tion; but to boys brought up like Jack the absence of such conveniences are trifles. A few runs up and down the bank, and a few rolls on the fresh sweet grass, answered all the purpose of a drying-machine, and our hero only regretted that he had no better clothes to put on. They had never looked so ragged and shabby before. His next care was to hide his precious piece of soap, which he knew he should have to resign altogether if he took it home. With an old rusty clasp-knife, one of his few treasures, he scooped out a hole in the ground, near the root of the tree, lined it cleverly with some stones, and, wrapping up his soap in a large leaf, he deposited it in this novel soap-dish, covering it up with some stones and leaves to make all secure. It is not too

much to assert, when we say that when Jack stepped forth from his retreat he had taken the first important step towards raising his condition in life, and that he had conquered his *first difficulty*.

And so the boy hoped himself, as he completed his toilet by combing his hair, and trying to make it look like Harry Morland's, whose stand-up tuft just above his forehead had always excited his admiration. Whether he succeeded or not in his imitation he could not tell, having no glass, and the water was scarcely clear enough to serve for one; but he was very sure on this point, namely, that he never again would be repulsed, as he had been by little Nellie, because his face was so dirty.

III.

Tells how Jack overcomes difficulty the second. — He pays for services done for him without money.

WHEN Jack undressed that evening he took a very minute survey, by the light of the full moon, of his trowsers, jacket, and waistcoat. The examination was far from satisfactory.

They had once been his father's Sunday suit, and had been cut down into a small size for him by an old woman who went from house to house doing such jobs of work as she could pick up, satisfied with her board and a mere trifle by way of remuneration. Very proud had he been of them

when he first put them on, for they had been his passport from infancy to boyhood,—in other words, he had forsaken petticoats for trowsers. But this was three years and a half ago; for two years they had been, not only his every-day, but his only suit, and their condition was much what may be imagined, considering his fondness for climbing trees and getting through furze bushes or brambles, as occasion required.

Still, though very bad, he thought they might be mended and made better than they were; so he ventured the next day to call his aunt's attention to their dilapidated condition.

She spoke less impatiently in reply than he expected, but said she should have no time to attend to them yet a while.

“May I get them mended if I can?” asked Jack; “and will you give me some bits of cloth?”

His aunt took down an old pasteboard box, which was filled with shreds and pieces of the very clothes on his back, and pushed it towards him.

“There’s plenty there, if you’re going to turn tailor yourself,” she said; “and I don’t suppose you’ll find any one else to mend you up unless you wait till I have time.”

Jack thanked her, and walked off with his shreds. He scarcely knew what he was going to do with them. He only felt that he should not like to ask Mary Naylor to teach him to read till he was in a more respectable condition; so here was difficulty

number two to be overcome. He did not despair; for, having mastered the affair of the soap and the washing, why should he not contrive to get some patches put on his clothes? If all other means failed, perhaps he could do it himself, as his aunt had suggested. But his plan was to go to Jenny Fowler, who had made the suit, and ask her to help him. She was a good-natured old creature, and not one to be afraid of. He found her at home, in a single room which she rented, busily engaged in repairing a black dress.

With some hesitation, Jack showed her his pieces of cloth, and asked her whether she would mind mending his clothes for him, as his aunt was too busy.

“Bless the lad!” she exclaimed, “he

hasn't come afore they needed looking to ! I'll do them right away when I've finished this here dress ; and I'm just a-putting the last stitches to it."

But Jack felt bound in honor to tell her that he should have no money to give her as payment. He had not a penny in the world, nor would his aunt give him any, he knew.

"Then I'll do it for love instead of money, dearie," said the unselfish old woman. "It's not much old Jenny can do for others ; but she may manage to scrape an hour to work for a lad who wants to be tidy."

"Do you like water-cresses, Jenny?" asked Jack.

"Like water-cresses ! Yes, to be sure I

do; they give a bit of flavor to the bread. But, bless the lad, what have water-cresses to do with patching jackets?"

"I thought, if you liked them, I would bring some nice fresh ones to you every day, as long as they last," said Jack. "I know where to find plenty; and I will gather you a bundle of sticks every day for your fire for a month; it will save you looking about and stooping to pick them up."

"Why, that will be quite grand payment," said Jenny; "though I'd have done your job without as soon as not. However, it won't hurt you to gather me a few cresses now and then; and as for the sticks, — 'twill make me feel almost like a lady to have them brought to my hand every day, and my poor old back will be thankful

enough for a holiday. Bring the clothes to me this afternoon; here's plenty of cloth to make a good job. I see they are the very same bits I cut off when I made them. But what's the matter, child? Why do you look so miserable-like all of a sudden?" For Jack's face had suddenly changed from its bright, sunny look to one clouded with dismay. What should he do whilst his clothes were being mended? He had no others to supply their place. Another difficulty! He told Jenny his trouble; but the cheerful body bade him take courage, they would manage. "I'll stitch away all the quicker," said she. "You shall just come and sit with me in your shirt while I do the trowsers; it will not be the first time I've had a little boy to care for;" and Jenny

heaved a sigh to the memory of the blue-eyed lad, about Jack's age, whom she had buried beside his father more than thirty years ago.

But Jack did not notice the sigh. He was thinking that matters grew worse and worse. He was obliged to confess to Jenny that that plan would not do, for the simple reason that he had no shirt to sit in.

"No shirt! and does your aunt let you go about with nought under these rags?" exclaimed she, indignantly. "Poor as she is, she might do better for you than that. However, I won't be going on to make you discontented with her; and we'll contrive. You shall just pop yourself into my bed whilst I work. 'Twill cheer me on to see your merry face peeping out."

“Difficulty the *second* conquered,” thought Jack, as he ran home to dinner; “but I do wish I had shirts like other boys.”

IV.

Old Jenny makes Jack a present, and so overcomes difficulty number three.

PUNCTUAL to the time Jenny desired him to come, Jack made his appearance in her room, and found her ready to begin her work. He had had time to run down to the water-cress pool, and gather some fine cresses, which he brought her in a little basket, made for the purpose of some green rushes that he had twisted together.

“Payment beforehand with you, I see,” said the old woman, smiling. “Now, then, off with the trowsers, child, and into the

bed. There's not a minute to lose if I'm to have them finished to-day."

Jack did not find lying in bed quite so agreeable a way of spending an afternoon as lolling on his back in the sunshine, or climbing trees to peep into squirrels' and birds' nests. However, it was some amusement to watch Jenny cutting the pieces of cloth, and fitting them to the holes in the trowsers. She was dexterous and quick with her needle, and he was amazed to see how respectable an appearance they were beginning to assume in her hands. But five o'clock came, which was her time for tea, and they were not finished.

"You shall have your tea with me this evening," said she. "Your aunt won't care, I'm thinking."



Jack in bed waiting for his suit.

“Care! no, indeed,” thought Jack. “She will only be too glad to be rid of me;” and he gave Jenny to understand that he was quite his own master as to where he went or what he did at present, though he was to go to work at the quarries when old enough.

“More’s the pity,” said Jenny, “that you are your own master; better far you should be going to school like other children.”

She had unconsciously touched on a tender subject. Jack could not resist telling her how great was his desire to learn to read, but that his aunt would not hear of his going to school; and then, as Jenny listened to him with great interest and sympathy, his heart warmed towards her more

and more, till he told her his plan of getting Mary Naylor to teach him to read, and at last actually confided to her his grand secret — not yet twenty-four hours old — of his bit of soap hid under the willow-tree, which he bought with the money the gentleman had given him. The pocket-comb also was produced out of the jacket-pocket, and duly admired; though Jenny asserted it was a penny too dear, as there were plenty in Stedwell market every Saturday, just as good, for twopence.

“You laid out your sixpence well, dearie, though,” she said; “and if what the gentleman said makes you want to be a clean, industrious boy, he will have given you more than money’s worth.”

“He said *he* was a poor boy once,”

said Jack, "but that he got on because he was resolved to, and that I might get on too, if I learned to conquer difficulties. I wonder if I could ever come to be such a gentleman as he looked?"

"Don't be wondering whether you can ever be a gentleman," replied Jenny; "but make up your mind to become a useful, honest man, doing your duty and work in the way God gives it you, and then you'll be as happy as any gentleman in the land."

Jack thought it seemed very queer to be lying in bed taking his tea when he was as well as he ever had been in his life, but on the whole he thoroughly enjoyed himself. It was something so new and delightful to have any one talking to

him so kindly, and interesting herself in his concerns as Jenny Fowler was doing. When, an hour or two later, she pronounced his trowsers finished, he felt almost sorry to go home, though she reminded him he must come again in the morning to have his jacket done. He did not forget to go into the fields to hunt for sticks. By nine o'clock he ran to Jenny with a nice-sized bundle of them under his arm.

Jenny went to bed later than usual that night. She sat thinking for some time after she had spelt out her verse or two in the Bible, and then she busied herself over the contents of a square deal box. She was generally asleep by eleven o'clock. but that hour found her still at her needle,

and it was nearly twelve when she laid aside her work and sought the pillow on which little Jack's head had been lying all the afternoon.

By twelve o'clock the next day the boy's suit was finished, — mended as well and as thoroughly as possible. Patches abounded, of course, but there were no holes, and a little brushing and sponging had done wonders towards a better appearance. Jack capered about with delight, and thanked Jenny again and again.

“After a time,” said he, “I shall perhaps find out some way of getting shirts and shoes. When I have them I will ask Mary to begin and teach me to read. *Two* difficulties I have got over already.”

Jenny went to her box and took some-

thing out which was folded up in a checked handkerchief. Undoing the package she showed him two coarse but very good blue and white shirts, about his own size.

“Look here,” she said, “these belonged to my own boy once. I’ve treasured them up for thirty-three years come next Lady-day, for that was when God took him from me. Many a time I’ve thought ’twould be wiser to do something useful with them, rather than let them lie in the box idle, just for me to look at sometimes. But now I think ’twould be a sin and shame in me not to give them to you, and you wanting them badly; so last night I let them out in the neck and round the wrist, for you are a bit stouter than my boy

was. Take them home, lad; they're yours now."

She would not listen to his thanks, but gently pushed him to the door, telling him it was time to go home to dinner. Then she turned and sat down to her own, but she did not eat much that day. She had done more than merely give Jack two shirts that she could never want herself, though apparently this was all that her gift to him comprised. She had made a sacrifice of her feelings. A lonely life had been her portion for many years. Her boy, her only child, had been cut off from her by a terrible accident. The quarries had been blasted, which were then just beginning to be worked. The child had not attended to the signal given for leaving

the place. He was amusing himself under a large overhanging stone; it fell upon him, and he was found lifeless. His mother bore her grief with a calmness proportioned to its great depth. Her neighbors believed her stunned; and then, seeing the calmness continue, they thought how well she had got over her trouble. But they did not know that in some minds grief can never find utterance; and such was the case with Jenny's. She nursed hers silently, but far too tenderly for her own happiness. Even when many years had fled, when old age had advanced, and when the memory of her dead boy might be supposed to be weak and faded, he was still remembered with undiminished love, and his little possessions were treasured in the

deal box, from a force of habit which had almost grown into an affection in itself. Those two checked shirts he had worn up to the day of his death; so now it can be better understood why we called it "a sacrifice of feeling," when she made up her mind to give them to Jack.

V.

Difficulty number four, a painful one to the feet, is overcome.

HERE'S another difficulty got over very easily," quoth Master Jack to himself, as he walked home with his two shirts under his arm. "I see a number more, though, before me. Now that I've got two shirts, and am mended up from head to foot, besides having a lump of soap and a comb of my own, why, I ought to have some shoes to my feet.

"Mary and Nellie always wear such nice black shoes and white socks," he continued. (Jack had got a habit of talking

out loud to himself, perhaps from being so much alone.) "I needn't care about having socks yet, for my trowsers come down to my heels, so socks wouldn't be much seen, but I'm almost the only boy who goes about with bare feet; yet my shoes at home hurt me so bad, and aunt says I must wear those or none."

Here was a serious difficulty indeed to his efforts to present a respectable appearance. Shoes and boots were expensive things. He had outgrown his only pair before they were worn out, and his aunt declared she would buy him no more till they were. He could get his feet into them, she saw, and this was enough for her; she had no sympathy with the pinches and pain they inflicted on him. "A boy

ought not to mind such things," she said; and this was all the comfort Jack got when he complained that they hurt him. The consequence was, that he gradually gave up putting them on, caring much less for the occasional pain inflicted by stones and thorns, than for the continued misery of tight shoes.

He examined them carefully when he got home. They were in very tolerable condition, but smaller than ever now for his feet, which had expanded in width since they had rejoiced in liberty.

"Difficulty fourth is a puzzler," said Jack, "but I must master him somehow. Suppose I take the shoes to Timothy Crawley, and ask him to stretch them, if he can."

Timothy Crawley was the village shoemaker, — a man who was said to have more children than wits. He worked hard to maintain them, never spent his money at the public house, and yet was greatly undervalued by his sharp, bustling, long-tongued wife. Had he been the husband of another woman, Timothy would probably not have had his sense disparagingly spoken of; but he was a man who loved peace and quiet, and had carried this liking to such an extent that he had become regularly hen-pecked. To him, then, Jack carried the strong, leather-laced boots made by Timothy himself more than half a year ago.

He found him seated as usual in his workshop, with his eldest boy beside him learning his father's trade. He was sur-

rounded with boots of every size, all waiting their turn to be mended, to say nothing of new ones in various stages of progression; for Timothy was a maker of some popularity with the quarrymen.

Jack's heart sank within him, for he feared that, with so much to do, Timothy would never condescend to attend to his small affair. But he was mistaken. The worthy shoemaker had a kindly heart beating under that leathern apron of his, and perhaps he was touched by Jack's shoeless condition. He examined the shoes, made him put them on, and at once pronounced them far too small to be stretched sufficiently for comfort. All he could do was to advise him to get his aunt to let him have a new pair.

“She says I must wear out these first,” said Jack, sorrowfully; “that she can’t afford to waste such good ones.”

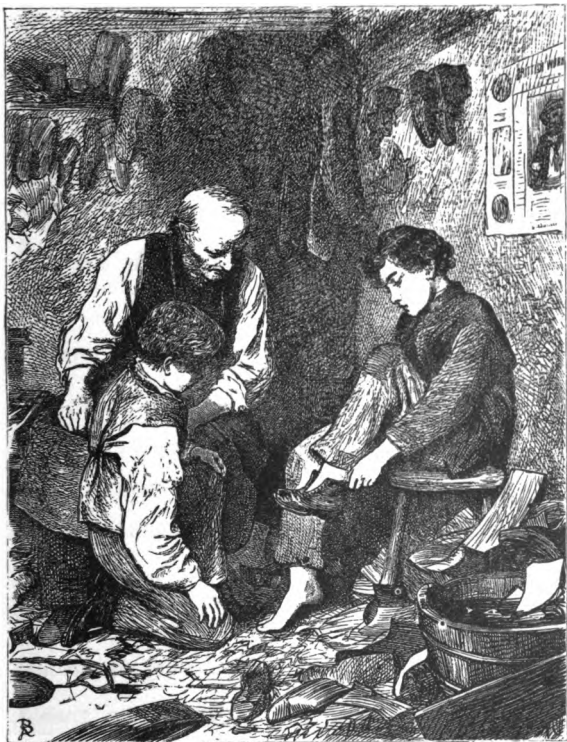
“They are good ones, sure enough,” said Timothy, who did not forget that he had been the maker of them; “but your aunt must not expect them to grow as your feet do; if she likes you to have another pair, tell her I’ll wait her own time for payment, so that it comes in by Christmas.”

There was no more to be said. Jack took up his boots, but his melancholy countenance touched Timothy, who had a father’s feelings for his own boys, and Jack was just the age of one of them. “Stop a moment,” said he, “give me your shoe again.” And he measured it with a pair standing near, little worn. “Try on these;

they are some I made for my Tom, but they've turned out a misfit, — being a deal too large, his mother says. Now, if they fit you, I've half a mind to let you have them, and I'll do up yours for Tom: they are much of a muchness as to the kind of shoe."

They were a capital fit, which decided the affair in Jack's favor. The boy fortunately never knew how dearly Timothy paid for his good-nature, in the shape of a scolding from his wife, who learned what he had done from her eldest son, — for, as we have said, he was in the workshop during the transaction. Her husband, as usual, took refuge in silence, and the storm passed over.

How can Jack's happiness be described as



Jack and the shoemaker's misfit.

he went away, having achieved this last conquest? He found it very disagreeable, it is true, to walk in shoes, as he had been so long without them. More than once he stopped with the intention of taking them off, and enjoying a good comfortable run in the old way. But he persevered, remembering his shoes would do him no good if he could not accustom himself to wearing them. " 'Tis another difficulty to master," thought he; and he trudged on, shoes and all.

His aunt was surprised to see what a reformation old Jenny had made in his clothes, and by no means displeased that she had been saved all trouble, for she was a poor hand at her needle. The shirts she seemed to consider an unnecessary article of clothing, but made no objection to the

prospect of washing one every week; and as for the shoes, she positively praised Jack for being so sharp as to have got a new pair for an old one out of Timothy. In short, she was well satisfied that the boy should get respectably clothed, provided it cost her neither trouble nor money, though he might go in rags rather than that she should be called upon to expend either the one or the other in his behalf; but she did actually, of her own accord, stitch together the broken straws of his hat, and promised to get him another before long.

VI.

Jack accomplishes his plan for learning to read. — Begins to wish to go to school. — Sees that he must overcome more difficulties.

TWO days later, when Mrs. Naylor was seated at work with her children, there came a tap at the cottage door, which was answered by a summons to enter.

She little expected to see Jack, who walked in somewhat timidly, as though he feared he were taking a liberty, yet with a droll mixture of self-confidence, conscious of looking very superior to the Jack they had always seen before. His face and hands were clean and bright as soap and water

could make them. His hair was parted and combed off his forehead. A blue and white shirt-collar appeared above his well-mended clothes, and Mary's own shoes were not blacker than those which he himself wore. In his hand he carried a very pretty, well-arranged nosegay of fern-leaves, woodbine, and dog-roses.

Mary looked delighted to see him, and her mother welcomed him cordially by saying: —

“Come in, Jack, and sit down; why, you look so nice this afternoon, I scarcely knew you at first.”

No words could have pleased him better. He wanted to be as unlike his old self in appearance as possible.

He did not, however, sit down as invited,



Jack's visit to Mrs. Naylor.

but stood looking at his nosegay, and thinking how to ask the favor he had come for. At last, finding there was no other way he could think of, he dashed into his petition at once.

“ Please I want to learn to read, and I came to see if Miss Mary would teach me, now as I’ve got to be clean and tidy. I’ve no money to pay with, but I can bring plenty of flowers every day; and when the whortleberries are ripe I will gather you as many as you like.”

“ O mother, do let me teach him ! ” here broke in Mary. “ I am sure he would soon learn. I know how to, for I sometimes teach the beginners at school.”

Mrs. Naylor did not require much persuasion. A few questions to Jack showed

her how he was longing for the advantages enjoyed by other children of his age, but from which he was shut out. She soon also drew from him the history of his personal transformation, which showed how resolved he had been to remove all hindrances in the way of his being taught. She had always pitied the child, but she and his aunt had not a feeling in common, so there had been no intercourse between them. Slovenly, untidy ways were as distasteful to Mrs. Naylor as they were natural to Susan Law. Jack could not have taken a surer method of winning her heart than by showing a desire to reform in these respects.

“Mary shall teach you, Jack,” she said; “but you must promise always to come as clean as you are to-day.”

Jack's white teeth grinned forth his delight, and he faithfully promised that no soiled face or fingers should ever be brought to the reading lesson.

"And when shall we begin, mother?" asked Mary, who had run to the shelf and taken down an old spelling-book, on which Jack's eyes fastened themselves with an eager look. "We could commence now, and then I could finish my work afterwards."

"Which means you think the present time is the best," said Mrs. Naylor, smiling. "Come, Jack, put down your cap; give me those pretty flowers to put in water, and sit down here with Mary."

And so, then and there, Jack Harold received his first lesson in the art of reading,

and it was easy to see that he was a pupil likely to do Mary credit.

It was settled before he left that he should come every day at that hour, and see whether she were at liberty to attend to him, which was likely generally to be the case; for Mary was as anxious to teach as he to learn; so no unnecessary obstacles were likely to be put in the way by either child.

Nor did their perseverance relax as the first novelty wore off. Every evening found them as interested in their work as the preceding one, and the consequence was that Jack's progress was rapid, and he could read words of one syllable in as short a time as most boys would have been in learning their letters. He never appeared without

an offering for Mary, either in the shape of flowers, or a rush basket full of whortleberries, or water-cresses fresh from the stream. And he won Nellie's favor forever by bringing her a young kitten. The child had long ceased to shrink from him. Perhaps the greatest reward he ever had, for keeping his face so clean, was when she first climbed on his knee and kissed his cheek.

He continued to spend his mornings and afternoons chiefly in wandering about the fields and woods, but now always with his spelling-book in his hand. The birds and squirrels got much less of his attention than they used to, though still he would constantly lie and puzzle his brain over the reasons of things, and wonder whether he should find out in books all he wanted to

know. Above all, he longed to learn more about other countries. There was a colored map of the world hanging up in Mrs. Naylor's cottage. It was a large one, on wooden rollers, and, though it occupied an inconvenient amount of room, she would not take it down, because it had been given her by the young ladies of the family in which she had been a faithful, valued servant. Jack was never tired of standing on a stool and examining it. Mrs. Naylor had explained it to him as far as she was able, and Mary knew all the different countries, and could even tell him anecdotes about the various nations, and how some were one color and some another. Her reading-book had enlightened her on many of these points, though she did not care much about them.

Stories were more in her way; but for Jack's sake she sought out all the chapters she could find on geography and the history of the world, and read them to him. Dull as she thought them at first, they acquired an interest when she saw what a charm they had for her listener, and what a pleasure it was to him to go afterwards to the map, and with her help hunt out the countries about which she had been reading.

One of Jack's subjects of thought used to be, how extremely he should dislike having to go and work in the quarries when he got a little older. He would so much rather be a school master than a quarry man, and have to do with books rather than hew away at blocks of stone.

He would sometimes indulge in a little castle-building on this subject, which of course fell to the ground as soon as reared, for he knew well that to the quarries he must go. His aunt was always talking about the time when he would be old enough.

Another and more manageable desire was to learn to write. He had not liked to say anything to Mary about it, because, though he was sure she would teach him, he did not know how to get pens and copy-book, and he was not a boy who liked to be troublesome. Then there were arithmetic and geography, and other things that the boys and girls learn at school. If he could only go and be taught like them! — but threepence a week was the sum to be paid,

and even if it were but a penny he knew his aunt would not give it.

He had surmounted several difficulties; but this one of going to school was of a magnitude that would have discouraged most boys situated as Jack was.

It seemed, though, as if his disposition was one that could not be daunted; and past successes emboldened him to hope on. He had, by his own exertions, gained a great deal; why should he not in some way or other earn money enough to go to school, at least for the winter?

But how? To a boy in a town this would have been a less difficult question; but in a country village it is not an easy matter for the most willing child of Jack's age to earn threepence a week.

Scheme after scheme he planned and rejected, and day after day passed on, and still he schemed and planned, and found he could do nothing. He consulted old Jenny, to whom he never failed to carry a bundle of sticks every evening, — no longer by way of payment for her work, but because he had begun to love the good old woman, and was glad to save her the trouble of stooping to pick them up for herself. But Jenny could not help him in this matter. She sympathized with him, and encouraged his wish to learn, because, she said, she believed that learning was a good thing. She always, however, concluded with the same words : —

“ God will help you, my boy, if you help yourself where you can. Trust him to do

all that is best for you. Keep on learning to read, and leave the rest till you can see your way before you."

And so Jack, who was learning many a lesson of wisdom from old Jenny's lips, tried to be patient, and to be willing not to go to school if no way seemed to be opened for him to do so. Perhaps he found, as many others have done before him, that it is a harder and more irksome duty to have to practise patience, than to be endeavoring to overcome obstacles by energy and activity.

It is generally easier to work than to wait; but we must ever remember that, be our age and our lot in life what it may, we cannot form our own plans. It is God who leads us on, step by step, in the path that he

knows to be best for us. What Jenny said to Jack applies equally to us all: "Trust Him to do all that is best for you."

VII.

Gipsies, baskets, and willow twigs, come to Jack's aid in dispersing his new set of difficulties. — He takes possession of a mountain cave.

TOWARDS the end of summer an encampment of gipsies came and located themselves in one of the lanes not far from the river. Their trade was basket and cage making. They brought bundles of osiers with them for the purpose, but helped themselves also pretty liberally from a plantation of young willow-trees which grew near the water-side.

They were, for the most part, a quiet, harmless set of people, and were taken little

notice of by the villagers. Jack was almost their only acquaintance; but to him they were very attractive. Their way of life was something like his own. He felt a sympathy with the little barefooted urchins who could scramble up trees like himself; for though Jack was never now seen without shoes in the vicinity of the village, he economized by taking them off in the woods. Above all, he liked to sit near the basket-makers, and watch their nimble fingers twine the pliant osiers in and out, round and round, till, as if by magic, they grew into baskets of every size and shape. He became a favorite with them also; for he was always obliging, and ready to help them in any way in his power. If he were near, the women knew how to get their teakettle



Jack as a nurse in the Gipsy Camp.

filled without trouble to themselves. He would run on errands to the shop, amuse the baby if its mother were engaged, help to soak the young osiers; nothing, in short, came amiss to him. In return, they taught him how to make a wicker cage for Nellie's thrush, and a very pretty, useful sort of basket, which he destined as a present for Jenny, to hold her work. He was so skilful over this, that he soon attempted a finer kind, made of very delicate twigs, just suited, as he thought, to carry Mary the flowers which he daily presented as his fee for her lesson.

But a sudden commotion was produced in the little community by the owner of the willow plantation having ordered his bailiff to watch for depredators, and secure them

in the act of taking the osiers. He came down upon two of them one day, but consented to let them off on condition they left the neighborhood at once.

So the next day they departed, much to Jack's regret. He helped them pack up, held the baby for the last time, and watched the cavalcade down the lane. As he turned to go away, he saw a bundle of white twigs, prepared for making the finer sorts of baskets, lying in a dry ditch by the road-side. It had been overlooked.

To snatch the bundle up and run after them was the work of a moment. But, instead of taking it from him, the basket-maker said:—

“Keep them yourself, my lad; you have such a good notion of making baskets, that

you may turn a penny by them some day. These are the best Devonshire twigs, such as you can't get here. Keep them and welcome, for old company's sake."

Jack thanked him heartily, and they went on their way.

"You may turn a penny by them some day." The basket-maker's words sounded again and again in the boy's ears. Turning a penny meant making money. Making money, in Jack's mind, meant going to school! He had given Nellie her wicker cage, and Jenny her basket. Even Mrs. Naylor had praised them, and said they were almost as good as if bought at a shop, and Jenny was equally pleased. With practice he should soon be able to make them still better; but then who would buy

them? No one in the village would lay out money on them, and, except Mr. Sutton's family and the clergyman's (and both lived some way off), there were none likely to care for such things. He went to his friend Jenny, taking his bundle of twigs under his arm. She encouraged him warmly.

"Who knows," said she, "but what this is the very opening we were waiting for? The Lord has his own ways and they are not our ways. It may be that *he* put it into the mind of the basket-maker to teach you to make the baskets and then to give you the twigs; and if so, he will bring his own purposes to pass. At all events it will be an employment for you, and that is better than idleness. Make some baskets,

and the next thing will be to try and sell them. The want of money is your difficulty now; maybe you are going to overcome it like the rest."

So Jack hoped, and with his usual zeal set to work; but again a difficulty. His aunt took a sudden fit of tidiness when she saw him seated on a stool with the twigs on the floor at his feet, and with one sweep of her broom sent a heap of them, which he had carefully selected from the rest, under the fire-grate.

Poor Jack sprang forward and seized them. In doing so he unfortunately upset a pitcher full of tea, which had been put by the fire to keep warm for one of the men from the quarry.

Susan's temper was never proof against

an accident of this sort, and if Jack were the aggressor she made no attempt to keep it within bounds. She seized the unfortunate twigs from his hand, thrust them into the embers, and would have doomed the whole bundle to the same fate had not Jack snatched them up and ran out of the house.

There was no safety for them in that vicinity, that was clear. He could not bury them, as he had done the soap, nor could he sit out in the fields on a rainy day to work at his baskets, even if he found a place for his twigs. "Difficulties again! always difficulties!" said the boy; "but they mustn't be master of me. I wish I had a tent like the gipsies; but wishing is of no use." Jenny Fowler would, he was sure,

let him keep his things in her room, and even let him work there sometimes; but she was often from home for the day, working at people's houses, and then she always locked her door; so that plan would not do. But Jack's wits were too much his friends to fail him in such an emergency. They sharpened themselves up in their brightest manner, and brought to his recollection a certain cave in the mountain, high up like the quarries, but in a much more inaccessible situation, — so much so that no feet but those of sheep or daring boys ever ventured to explore it. To Jack the narrow sheep-track that led to it was familiar and easy. The cave had often been visited by him, and he thought it would answer well for a workshop, especially as it was snugly situated

behind a sudden turn in the mountain, so as to hide it from general view, and he would not be seen going in and out, which might arouse curiosity too much for the safety of his work.

Thither he turned his steps. There was a large stone inside, of a sufficient height to be safe from sheep, which would do famously for a shelf, and a smaller one near the entrance sufficed for a seat. What more could he desire? Once again he had conquered a difficulty. His retreat answered in every respect. He worked away at his baskets generally for two or three hours daily. No one ever disturbed him. Sometimes a sheep would peep in, and look surprised at seeing one of his own haunts preoccupied, but would trot off again, quite



Jack at work in his cave.

willing to yield up the possession. With his hands busily at work, and his spelling-book open on his knee, Jack sat in his cave as happy as a prince.

At length he completed two very pretty baskets, and found he had still material left for another. He took those he had finished to Mrs. Naylor, and consulted her about the disposal of them.

She thought for a moment, and then said, "I am going to Stedwell market on Saturday to sell some eggs and chickens; I will take the baskets with me and show them to any ladies who may happen to come near me. But what do you expect to get for them?"

Jack had no idea what, but modestly asked if she thought threepence would be

too much; having fixed on that sum solely because threepence a week would pay for his schooling, and he could manage to make one a week, he thought.

“They are worth more than that,” said Mrs. Naylor, decidedly. “Any one who takes a fancy to the baskets would be willing to give more than double that sum; but I will take them and do my best for you.”

On Saturday, just as the reading-lesson was finished, Mrs. Naylor returned. Jack glanced anxiously at the arm on which his baskets were hanging when she left home in the morning. They were gone, and a pleasant smile told him all was right. Mary fairly jumped, and clapped her hands with delight.

“Yes, Jack, they are sold,” said Mrs.

Naylor. "I had not been in the market an hour before a lady came up to me for some eggs. She has bought of me before, and says she means always to come to me first, because she finds mine are fresh, and she wants them for her invalid daughter, who must have everything of the best. Well, she was just taking them one by one from me, and putting them carefully in a reticule bag, when I ventured to say, 'You wouldn't like to buy one of these baskets, would you, ma'am? The eggs would lie nicely in it, and they are not dear.' She took one in her hand, and liked it, I saw; for she showed it to her little girl, who was with her, and asked if she did not think her sister would be pleased with it, and perhaps fancy the eggs better if they came out of it.

And the child said, 'Yes, for Katie was always so pleased with new baskets.' The lady asked the price, and I said ninepence; for that was the sum I had fixed on in my mind going along. She gave it me directly, and we put the eggs in, and off they went, and I saw them looking at it and admiring it as they walked down the market."

"And the other, mother?" said Mary, who like Jack was listening with breathless attention; "who bought the other?"

"Well, who of all people but farmer Renton! He passed me as I was coming out of the market, after I'd sold my chickens and eggs, and as usual had a kind word to say to me. I couldn't help just showing him the basket, and asking if he would like to take it home to little miss; for I knew

she always looked for something on market-day. The farmer laughed, and asked me if I were taking to basket-making; and I said 'No, that I wasn't, but that a poor boy was who would be glad to have it bought.' And then he took it, and gave me ninepence directly. So here are eighteen pence for you, all your own, Jack."

He could hardly find words to thank her enough. She wrapped the money in paper, and charged him not to lose it.

"It will pay for six weeks' schooling," said she; "and you can make more, you know."

But much as Jack longed to go to school, there was something else on his mind which must be done first. Old Jenny was very poor, and now that he had the means of

paying her for mending his clothes, he wished to do so.

Straight to her abode he hastened, and, breathless with running and excitement, he laid the money in her lap. "It is yours, Jenny," he exclaimed, as soon as he could speak. "My two baskets have been bought, so now I can pay you for working for me."

"No, no!" said the old woman, "not a penny of your money will I take, dearie. Haven't you paid me over and over by bringing me sticks? and do you think I'll take what you've worked for so hard that you may go to school? So, say not another word," she added, as she saw the boy going to press it on her; "but, mayhap it will be the best for me to keep it for you in my box till you want it." She had an in-

tuitive feeling that it would not be so safe in his aunt's house.

"Then, please, Jenny, give me three-pence of it," said Jack, "for my bit of soap is all gone; and now I can buy another square."

The three pence were given, and the fifteen pence were safely deposited in the deal box. Another piece of soap was purchased, and duly hidden where its predecessor had lain.

VIII.

A struggle with conscience, which reminds Jack that difficulties must not be got rid of at the expense of honesty.

JACK'S success with these two baskets encouraged him to lose no time in commencing another; but when that was done his twigs would be all used up, for, alas! the flames had devoured as many as would have made a fourth. He remembered the willow plantation by the river-side. A few of those would serve his purpose, for he had learned how to soak and peel them.

But had he any right to get them, when

for that very reason the gipsies had been made to leave the place? was a question which intruded itself. Certainly, very few would suffice for his purpose; he would have thought nothing of taking them before the gipsies came, neither would any other boy, he felt sure. Still he hesitated. He had heard how angry the bailiff had been with the basket-makers. True, they had made serious devastation in the plantation, because of the number they had carried off day by day; but it appeared to honest Jack that, if they stole because they took them without leave, he would be doing the same thing if he supplied himself from the same source. His third basket was nearly finished, and twigs must be had, or there would be an end to his work. This new difficulty

was a dangerous one to our hero, for it might so easily be overcome in a wrong way.

He took a walk in the direction of the plantation. It was close to where the encampment had been. The young shoots looked very tempting. There were hundreds of places where the gipsies had broken them off the trees. He could see the marks of their feet in the wet, soft ground. If he gathered as many as he would be likely to want for months, no one could possibly miss them. Should the bailiff come to look, he would only suppose the gipsies had taken all that were gone.

Jack had had few religious advantages. He had seldom been to church, and never to any Sunday school. But still he knew very well that it was wrong to steal; he

knew that there was a God in heaven who could see everything, and that his eye would be on him if he took the willow-shoots, although the bailiff might be miles away.

Jenny had talked to him sometimes about these things, or rather she had often made little quaint remarks which had kept them before the boy's mind. For Jenny loved her Bible and her God. Ever since he had taken her boy to live with him she had made him her friend; and she had, almost without knowing it, spoken of God in such a way to Jack, that the boy had begun to think of him as a friend also. He knew Jenny would not, knowingly, displease him, and neither ought he. Yet if, as she had said, God had perhaps put

it into the basket-maker's mind to teach him and give him the twigs, and so opened a way for him to earn some money, should he be doing wrong in just taking a few of these willows growing before him in such abundance? The boy's mind grew puzzled. One moment he felt sure it would be stealing to take them; the next, he tried to persuade himself it would be wrong not to use the means in his power of going on with his work. Once he even sprang over the fence into the plantation; but something seemed to tell him to go back, and go back he did, and walked resolutely away.

He did not loiter, not even on the spot where the gipsies had been. There was the place where they had lighted their fire; some of the white ashes were still

to be seen, and, at a little distance, lay a quantity of chips and pieces of broken saplings. Jack would not trust himself to stay a minute longer in the neighborhood of the plantation, so he passed quickly by.

He did not know that he had just achieved a greater conquest than any of his others. He sought his friend Jenny, and told her how he wanted more willows, but that he thought he ought not to take them. Her views were as clear as noon-day on the subject.

"Never take what isn't yours, dearie. God has given them there willows to Mr. Sutton, not to you. You've no business with them any way, no more than the gipsies had. If you made baskets of them, you'd just be selling what wasn't yours

to sell, and 'twould be the devil's plan for keeping you back, not God's for getting you on."

"I am sorry to have to give up making baskets though," said Jack, sorrowfully.

"Perhaps you needn't. Suppose you go and ask Mr. Sutton if he will let you get some twigs when you want them; they say he is a thorough kind-hearted man. I wouldn't ask the bailiff; he's a sharp one, and rather hard on the poor."

Jack's face brightened. "I think I will," said he. "I see him on horseback sometimes, going up to the quarries. Dare I stop him though?"

"There's nothing to be afraid of if you're not begging. He can't abide beggars. He fancies them all an idle lot.

Perhaps it's because he has offered them work in the quarries when they've seemed hale, hearty folks, and they've so often refused it. One man, they say, once told him to his face that he found begging pleasanter nor working, and a better trade too. So since then the 'squire's set his face ag'in begging; but he'll always lend a helping hand to those who like to work. If I were you I'd tell him how I wanted to go to school, and that you can make baskets and sell them to earn the money for it, only you don't know what to do for twigs; and you thought perhaps he would let you have a few sometimes."

"All right!" exclaimed Jack, with a caper that shook Jenny's reel of cotton off the table, and sent it under the chest of

drawers, causing him to dive for it; "I will watch for him. Perhaps I shall be able to finish my other basket before he comes, and then I will show it to him, that he may see I really can make them."

He worked so hard that he completed it by the following evening. Next day he espied the 'squire slowly going up the mountain-side on horseback, with his daughter on a pony by his side.

It was not a difficult matter for Jack to overtake him at the pace he was going, even though he had to fly to a tree to fetch his basket, which he had hung in a bough out of sight.

IX.

A meeting with the 'squire and his daughter. — Another difficulty removed.

PAPA," said Miss Sutton, "I think this little boy wants to speak to you; he keeps coming up at every wide place in the path, and bowing."

Mr. Sutton drew in his horse. They had just reached a sort of platform where two horses could stand abreast, and there was room also for Jack.

"Please, sir," said he, pulling away at the tuft of hair which stood luxuriantly aloft now, — thanks to daily training, — "please, sir."

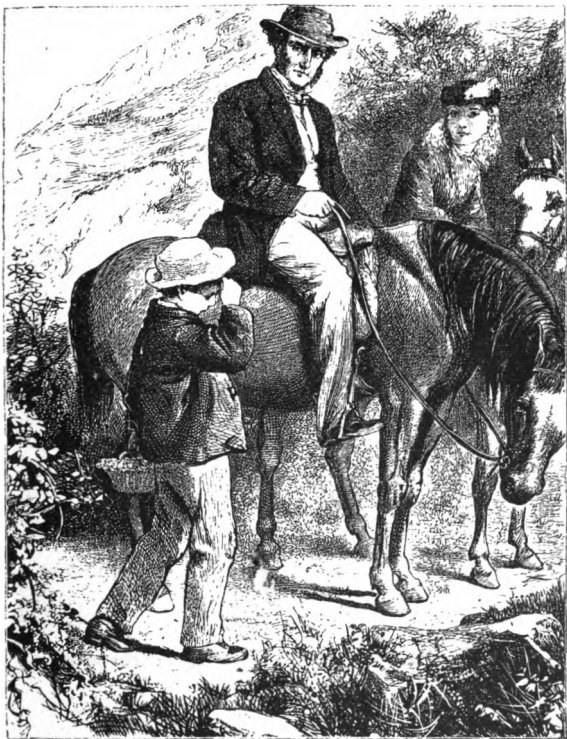
“Well,” asked Mr. Sutton, “what am I to please? Why don’t you speak on, lad?”

His tone of voice was somewhat impatient; but that was because he thought the boy was going to beg.

It was a terrible moment for Jack, who had never even seen the great man close before. He appeared to him almost an awful personage, — this monarch of the mountain on which they stood, as well as of so much of the surrounding lands. He was in the middle of his most disagreeable difficulty now; but he must get through it.

“Please, sir, may I get some willows from the plantation to make baskets?”

“Ho! ho! youngster,” said the ’squire,



Jack's speech to the Squire.

“so you and your people are still in the place, and you think to get round me by fair words? Why, I thought you had all been gone long ago.”

Jack stared; he could make nothing of this most unaccountable speech.

“Aren’t you one of the young vagabonds who, I was told, broke into my plantation of willows, and broke them down so?”

Jack saw now how it was. The ‘squire mistook him for one of the gipsy party who had been ordered out of the neighborhood. He quickly explained that he did not belong to them.

Mr. Sutton’s face relaxed; and he asked more gently how many willows he required.

This was a question puzzling to answer. At length the boy replied that he wanted to

keep making baskets all the winter, that he might try and sell them, and put himself to school with the money they fetched.

He had quite forgotten to show the one he held in his hand; but the young lady espied it, and, taking it in her hand, she examined it more closely. "It is very pretty," said she. "Look, papa, shall we not buy this one and take it home to mamma? How much is it, little boy?"

"I got nine pence each given me for the two others I made," said Jack. "Mrs. Naylor put the price for me."

"So Mrs. Naylor knows all about you, then?" said the 'squire; "that says well. And you want to put yourself to school? I like a boy who can help himself. But, suppose I were to give you leave to have

some of my willows, how do I know that you would not take in a tribe of boys who would break them all down? Besides," said he, sharply, a sudden thought striking him, "where did you get the willow for this basket? I suspect it's as much mine as yours, after all."

Jack explained that he had had it given him, and how the basket-maker had taught him his trade.

The young lady listened with great interest; and the 'squire began to think the lad deserved encouragement.

"If I give you permission to have what twigs you want," said he, "you must promise me never to take any one else when you get them; for my leave would be given only to *you*. But I must see Mrs. Naylor be-

fore I can decide. I will ride round by her house, and you can go to her and ask what message I have left for you."

He rode on. The young lady reined back her pony, and put one shilling into Jack's hand. "That is for your basket," said she. "Do not be afraid. Papa will be sure to let you have the twigs; and perhaps we shall be able to find you some customers."

She trotted on to join her father, leaving Jack to look after her, and to think that he never in his life saw any one so beautiful or so kind as that gentle young lady, whose voice and words were more to him than even the shilling she had dropped into his hand.

He felt very impatient to know what would be the result of the visit to Mrs.

Naylor, and watched the 'squire's movements from a projecting crag of the mountain. He thought he was much longer than usual amongst the quarries, and was surprised when at last he and his daughter remounted their horses, which had been sent down to meet them at the foot of the hill, to find that the church clock was then only striking twelve. He traced their course through the village till they came to Mrs. Naylor's cottage, and then he saw the 'squire tap at her door with his riding-whip, and Mrs. Naylor come out and stand talking to him for some time, and the young lady rode up close, and seemed to be talking too. It could not surely all be about him. If so, he feared Mr. Sutton must be unwilling to grant his request, and that

Mrs. Naylor was trying to soften him, for he knew she was a great favorite at the Hall.

From his post on the crag he could see everything distinctly, and not for one instant did he remove his eyes from the group at the cottage. At last he observed Mrs. Naylor take something down from the wall of the house and show it to the young lady, and this was — yes, he was quite sure it was — the wicker cage he had made for Nellie's thrush !

His heart beat high. They must, then, be talking about him, and no doubt Mrs. Naylor was showing them the kind of willows wanted for cages ; or possibly the 'squire had asked to see whether he could identify those that the cage was made of

with his own. And Jack was by no means sure they were not his. He had never thought about the matter when he made it, but had just accepted whatever the basket-maker had given him to learn upon. At length they rode away at a brisk canter. Mrs. Naylor hung up the cage again, laid some branches on the top to soften the sun's rays to the bird's head, and then went in and shut the cottage door.

Jack's impulse was to run down instantly to ask what the 'squire had said, and he was just starting for that purpose when the sound of a bell, which rang for the workmen at the quarries, reminded him that it was his own dinner-time. He would rather have gone without his dinner than remain in ignorance as to his fate about the willow-

twigs, on which his future prospects seemed just now to depend so much ; but he remembered that his aunt had said she wanted him to go to a farm-house to carry a message to one of the working-men there, and that she had desired him to come home punctually in the middle of the day, that he might lose no time. So there was no help for it; he must restrain his impatience as best he could. It would not be possible for him to go to Mrs. Naylor's before his usual hour; for, if he vexed his aunt, she would very probably prevent his going then, in order to punish him.

But good news awaited him then. Mr. Sutton had been quite satisfied with what he had heard about Jack, and had given leave for him to gather as many willow-

shoots as he required for his own use. Miss Sutton had looked at the cage, and left an order for one to be made exactly like it in form, but a size larger, for her brother's jackdaw ; and she had repeated to Mrs. Naylor the hope expressed to Jack, that they might be able to dispose of some of his baskets.

X.

Jack pays a visit to the Hall.

MAMMA, look at this basket," exclaimed Rhoda Sutton, as she entered the drawing-room on her return from her ride; and she held it aloft for the inspection of her mother and two younger sisters.

It excited a good deal of admiration, especially when Rhoda informed them it was manufactured by a poor boy who had only made two or three before; and she told of Jack's overtaking them on the mountain, and asking if he might have some willows.

“And O mamma,” she continued, “if you had only heard all Mrs. Naylor told us about him! Papa went to her to find out if what he said was true, and she seemed as if she could not praise the child enough. She said he is an orphan, brought up by a cross, ill-natured aunt, who will not look after him, or clothe him properly, or let him go to school. So the boy has resolved to do something for himself, and he hopes to raise money enough by making baskets to pay for his schooling.”

“What age is he?” asked Mrs. Sutton.

“About ten years. He is such a bright, such an intelligent-looking little fellow! And, mamma, I have not told you the best part of Mrs. Naylor’s story yet. She says that this aunt would not let him make his

baskets in her cottage, but burned some of his twigs because she found them lying about; so the child took them off to a cave on the mountain, and there he sits and works, and learns his spelling, for Mary Naylor is teaching him to read."

This account of Jack created the greatest interest at the Hall. The girls were anxious to put him to school themselves.

But the 'squire negatived the idea.

"Do not take away from the lad the motive for exertion," said he. "From what Mrs. Naylor said, it appears that he has within him that which will enable him to work his own way in a most unusual manner. Remove from him all difficulties, and you will probably turn him into an ordinary boy, who will just do what he is

told to do, and nothing more. Sell his baskets for him if you like, but do not remove the necessity for making them."

The wisdom of this was too obvious to be doubted, so they agreed to help him by keeping him supplied with work; and as Rhoda had ordered a cage he had employment for the present.

About a week later Miss Sutton was told that there was a little boy in the hall who had brought a wicker cage, made, he said, by her orders.

It proved to be a strong, thoroughly well-constructed cage, none the worse habitation for a bird that it was not quite as perfect a shape as a more experienced hand would have produced.

"Bring the child in, Rhoda," said her

mother. "I should like to see one who is so industrious."

She was sitting in the library, — a large room lined with books from the ceiling to the floor. Jack seemed to himself to have got into another world, as he was led into a room so unlike anything he had ever formed an idea of. Luxurious couches, chairs, tables, carpet, etc., were to him such novelties that he stared around in bewilderment, and could scarcely recover his self-possession so as to answer Mrs. Sutton's questions properly.

But what at length so fixed his gaze that he could look at nothing else was the vast assemblage of books. There were more than he thought the world contained. Mrs. Sutton observed his delighted surprise,



Jack at the Hall.

and encouraged him to talk to her about his desire for knowledge. There was a mixture of simplicity and observation about the boy that struck her very much; but, though determined not to lose sight of him, she quite agreed with her husband that it would be a pity not to let him continue to feel that he was dependent on his own exertions. They asked him what price the cage was to be, but Jack had not given a thought to the subject, and he said so.

“I will give you five shillings and sixpence,” said she. “You shall have good pay for this one to encourage you to go on.”

Jack’s eyes sparkled. Mrs. Sutton knew why, — though he did not tell her what he intended to do with it.

His well-patched clothes were not lost on her. She desired her maid to search for a suit outgrown by her own boy, and these she gave him to take home. She also gave him an order for some more baskets, telling him he might be as long as he liked making them; for she was aware his time would be much more fully employed than hitherto, when he began to go to school.

Jack left the Hall a very happy boy. He was wholly unconscious of the favorable impression he had made on his new friends, and of the value they might be to him hereafter. But he was charmed with his new suit, which would enable him to appear as well dressed as any boy in the village, and would prevent the necessity of his lying in bed again, whilst some fresh repairs, medi-

tated by Jenny, were effected on his old ones. There was now no hindrance to his going to school at once. The money Mrs. Sutton had given for the cage would pay for some time ; he could not rest contented without knowing for *how* long. But this was a work of some difficulty to a boy who had never learned his multiplication or pence table. Still even here he would not be overcome for want of trying. He collected together a heap of stones by the road-side, and divided and subdivided them into imaginary shillings and pence. He knew that twelve pennies made one shilling, and this piece of knowledge enabled him to form an ingenious calculation by the help of his stones, which showed that he had sufficient money to pay his schooling for six months ; by the end of

which time he would have made plenty more, probably.

Before he went home, he paid a visit to old Jenny, and gave her his five shillings and sixpence to add to the fifteen pence she already had in keeping for him. The good woman had greatly rejoiced over the success of his interview with the 'squire.

"Honesty is always the best policy," said she. "Had you taken them willows you would never have dared ask the lady to buy your baskets, lest you should be found out; and now you've got, not only willows, but orders as well. Thank God, Jack, that he has helped you to be an honest lad."

XI.

Jack puts himself to school, and becomes his own benefactor.

BUSHGROVE was but a hamlet attached to the larger village of Repton, about half a mile distant. Here there was an excellent national school, with a superior master, one who had the well-doing of the children greatly at heart, but to whom it was a constant disappointment that, as soon as the boys were beginning to feel an interest in their own advancement, they were taken away from him to work in the quarries. It was seldom he could keep them beyond the age of twelve years at the furthest, and a

strong, well-grown boy would be taken away sooner.

Two days after Jack's visit to the Hall, as Mr. Hartley, the school-master, was looking over some copy-books in the empty school-room, after the dismissal of the children, he heard a tap at the door, and in walked our friend Jack, dressed in his new suit. Jenny had made a few alterations in it, so that it fitted him well, and his general appearance was that of great respectability. His aunt had not kept her promise of buying him a new hat; but Mrs. Naylor had a great harvest of apples this year, and had sold them so well, last market-day, that she resolved Jack should reap some of the benefit. So she went to the shop and bought him a nice black cloth cap. Mary had made

some white collars in anticipation of his going to school. She was beginning to feel proud of her pupil, whose progress in reading did both her and himself credit. She was very anxious that his appearance should be equal to that of the other boys in the school.

Dressed as he was to-day, it was not only equal but superior; for Jack's habits of thought and his natural intelligence of mind had given an expression almost of refinement to his features.

Mr. Hartley looked at him with no small interest, as the boy explained that he wished to begin and come to school; and taking six shillings from his pocket he laid it on the table, and said that was payment for six months in advance. This

was altogether a most unusual mode of proceeding. It was customary for parents, not children, to come to him to transact this part of the business on their first entering the school; and although it was the rule that they should pay a week beforehand, longer than this was never thought of. But here was a novel state of affairs, — a boy come to ask to be taken to school who stood in the light of both parent and purse-keeper to himself!

Jenny had wisely advised Jack to request Mr. Hartley to accept the six months' pay in advance. She knew Susan Law well enough to fear that she would find the money very convenient if she could manage to beg or borrow it from Jack. Mr. Hartley, being a shrewd man, began

to suspect the state of the case after he had put a few questions to the lad.

“And so you have earned this money yourself,” said he, “and you are anxious to learn what I can teach you?”

“Yes, sir; I would rather learn than do anything else.”

“Then I am not afraid but that you will get on quickly, since you have thought so much of the advantage of coming to school that you have made an effort to pay for yourself rather than remain untaught. There is a motto, which says, ‘Resolve well and persevere.’ Now, you have proved that you have at all events resolved well; perseverance is the next thing, and that I hope will follow. If it does, I have no doubt but that the results will be such

as will well reward me for the trouble of teaching, and you for the trouble of learning. You had better come and begin to-morrow morning." And then Mr. Hartley opened a large book and wrote down Jack's name and age, and the date of the month when he was to begin his attendance, which little ceremony had the greatest effect on the boy's feelings of consequence. He watched every letter as it was rapidly written. Each stroke of the pen seemed to him to be something more done towards raising him from his present condition. True, they were mere meaningless strokes to him, inasmuch as he could not read writing; but he knew that they were enrolling his name amongst those of other school-boys, to him a great distinction in

itself! He had entered that large school-room merely as Jack Harold, who was nobody at all. He quitted it as "Jack Harold, school-boy;" endorsed, paid for, and acknowledged as such! So far had he got on in life, and so far had he conquered the difficulties which had lain in his path.

XII.

Fresh troubles for Jack in quite a new form.

JENNY had shown herself to be a sagacious woman when she made Jack take his money to Mr. Hartley, instead of keeping it in her hands. Susan Law was beginning to be aware that her nephew was making money by some means or other; otherwise how could he propose putting himself to school? For he had told her he hoped to be able to go without his doing so costing her anything. She listened without interest at first, thinking that perhaps somebody was going to pay

for him, and to this she would not have objected, seeing that she should be no worse thereby. But the case altered when she found that he had actually provided the means for his schooling for six months. She suddenly took a great interest in the way Jack had been spending his time lately; she insisted on his fetching the basket he had made for Jenny's work, for her to see, inquired minutely how much he had had for those that Mrs. Naylor took to market, and for the one Miss Sutton purchased. She even took a walk by Mrs. Naylor's cottage to try and get a peep at the cage which a neighbor had told her Jack had made for Nellie's thrush. Her covetousness was aroused. Jack was not yet strong enough to work at the quarries,

but if he were so expert with his fingers, and could thus turn them to account, she did not see why she should not reap the benefit.

She was not pleased, then, when she found he had seen Mr. Hartley, had his name entered in the school list, and was actually going the next day.

She would greatly have preferred his spending his hours at his baskets, which she thought might be sold at Stedwell market constantly; and the more she thought of it, the more she persuaded herself into the belief that whatever he could earn was due to her, and that it was a waste of his time for him to go to school.

“Of what use would reading, and writing, and figures ever be to him, quarryman

as he would be all his life?" she argued; and with this notion she tried to inspire Jack, — we need scarcely say, without success.

What boy could be happier than he was when he took his place on the form in the school-room, and became the possessor of a slate and pencil and copy-book and other little et ceteras? At first he was placed among boys less than himself; but Mr. Hartley remarked, as he showed him his place, that he did not expect to see him there long.

It is wonderful what man, woman, or child can effect when the whole mind is given to any particular purpose with all the energy possessed. Such was the case with Jack. He did not know how long he might

enjoy his present advantages, and he made the most of every hour, and of every word of instruction that fell from Mr. Hartley's lips. The other boys began to feel an involuntary respect for one who was beginning to rise amongst them in the school so steadily. He was no longer looked upon, as in former days, as poor ragged Jack, but as a lad who was a great favorite with the master because he was so clever and industrious. They were not jealous of him, because he never bragged, or seemed to be proud of answering a question others could not. His humble-mindedness, combined with his natural sweetness of disposition, soon made him a favorite with them, and he was sought after in their games and sports out of school hours. But, though as fond of play as any of them,

Jack had seldom time to bestow upon it. He was very differently situated from the rest, and so he felt. They had all parents who cared for them, encouraged their progress with their lessons, and were striving to keep them respectably clothed. He, on the contrary, was unloved, and constantly discouraged by his aunt in his efforts for improvement. He might go in rags and welcome, if he liked; and, indeed, must do so as far as she was concerned. In short, poor Jack stood in the position, at ten years and a half old, of having adopted a child of that age, whom he had to think for, to clothe, and to pay for schooling, that child being himself.

He had still many difficulties to contend with of a most trying nature. Finding that for very shame's sake she could not stop his

going to school, Susan satisfied herself with insisting on his working at his baskets every spare minute. In vain he pleaded that he wanted to practise his writing and learn his lessons. She would reply that too much time was already taken up with them, and that since he had acquired the power of earning money he must do so in order to pay her for his board and lodging. He had unfortunately told her that Mrs. Sutton had given him an order for some baskets, not limiting him as to number. The woman saw a little harvest lay before her if she managed matters properly.

She salved her conscience, if indeed she possessed one, by reminding it that Jack was not her own boy, only a nephew whom she had taken through charity, and there-



Jack in disgrace.

fore it was but right that he should begin and pay her back as soon as he could.

Poor child ! it was a terrible trial to him to find his own little expedient thus turned against himself; to know that he must hasten home from school to begin to work, and that his aunt was watching him lest he should lose any time, for she made him sit at home under the pretence that the weather was too cold for him to be in the cave. And, indeed, the days were now too short for him to have made use of it much longer.

Still, in spite of all these troubles, Jack kept up a courageous heart. He could study his lessons whilst he wove his baskets. He continued to practise his writing at odd moments, and was constantly commended for his industry by Mr. Hartley, who was

greatly pleased with his new scholar, in whom he saw the germs of no ordinary powers of application. He only regretted that he should lose him after a time, when he went to day labor.

He was not lost sight of by the family at the Hall. More than once Miss Sutton and her father called at the school-house and made inquiries about him of Mr. Hartley, who always spoke of the boy in the highest terms. Mrs. Sutton bought his baskets, having no idea that the money would be instantly appropriated by his aunt, and not in any way expended on Jack.

At length the winter drew to its close, and symptoms of spring were approaching. Jack was beginning to wonder whether his aunt intended to forbid his going to school

any more at the end of the six months, when she was suddenly summoned hence by an attack of paralysis.

She died unregretted by all except Jack, who had a kindly feeling for her, notwithstanding the neglect and unkindness she had too often shown him. But her house had been a home for him; now he had none; and it was with a feeling of desolation he had never experienced before, that he turned away from her grave, wondering what was to be his destination in future.

XIII.

Better times seem coming for Jack.

KEEP up a good heart, dearie. God knows all about it, and he will find you a home, even if it should be no better a one than with old Jenny."

He was sitting with her the day after the funeral. There was a strong affection between them.

"I must try and get work in the quarries at once; there are some boys not much bigger than I who are put to wheel stones."

"Well, dear, if nothing else turns up, you must."

“And good-by to school for a^lways.”

A tap at the door was followed by Mary Naylor running in hastily.

“The 'squire is at our house, and wants to see you, Jack. I knew you were here, so I ran over. Come quick!”

Mr. Sutton and his daughter were in Mrs. Naylor's cottage.

“We have come to see after you, Jack,” said the 'squire. “We must settle what is to be done with you. What would you like, yourself?”

“I must go to the quarries, sir.”

“You wish to?”

“I shall not like it,” replied Jack; “but that makes no difference. I'll go and do my best.”

“I have another plan for you, which I

think will be a better one. I know you like your lessons, and it is a pity they should cease. I propose to board you here with Mrs. Naylor, who is willing to receive you for three years. I will pay for your board, and you shall continue to go on paying for your schooling. It will depend on yourself what becomes of you at the end of three years. If Mr. Hartley's expectations come true, you will be quite a scholar by that time."

It seemed to Jack as if one of the great stones from the quarry had just been lifted off his heart, or as though he had been groping his way through a mist, not knowing whither he was going, or whether he should ever find the path he was seeking; but that now suddenly the sun had shone

forth, the mist had vanished, and his road lay straight and clear before him. He longed to express his grateful thanks in words, but something rose up in his throat and made him feel afraid he should cry if he opened his lips. He could only bow, and look up in the kind-hearted 'squire's face with a countenance that told all he wished to say.

Mr. Sutton understood him well. He would rather have had that look than the most eloquent words, and, patting Jack's head kindly, he said:—

“A boy who can help himself as you have done deserves to be helped, Jack. You must be as busy as ever; for, mind, your school payment is still to be your own affair.”

And so Jack went to live with Mrs. Naylor, where for a time all his difficulties seemed to have vanished, except such as Mr. Hartley gave him to conquer daily with his book or his slate.

XIV.

Jack has to make an important choice. — Jenny's farewell.

IT would be lengthening our story too much if we were to follow our young hero through his national school career during the three years following his aunt's death. Suffice it to say, that his progress exceeded Mr. Hartley's most sanguine expectations, and made the 'squire more than ever his friend.

He never failed in paying his own way as far as going to school was concerned, always doing so by means of his industry in one way or another.

Mr. Sutton had intended to place him in some office at the age of fourteen; but when that time arrived it appeared both to him and Mr. Hartley as if the boy possessed abilities which might possibly enable him to take a high stand some day as a scholar. It was not only because he had considerable natural talent that they were led to this conclusion, but because he had from so early an age acquired the power and habit of overcoming difficulties as they arose in his path.

“He has both determination and perseverance,” said Mr. Hartley, “to an extent I never met with before.”

Mr. Sutton pondered the matter over. At length he sent for Jack, and made him the offer of either placing him in a mer-

chant's office, or putting him as a boarder in the very excellent grammar school at Stedwell.

There were one or two capital scholarships attached to this school, the best of which would, with economy, enable a young man to pass through college.

"Now, Jack," said Mr. Sutton, "think well before you decide on either of my two offers. In each case you will have to push your own way in future. In an office you may get on by making yourself valuable to your employers through your steady, business-like habits and high integrity. Your success for the future, if you go to school, will depend mainly on your application to study; and your resolve to master the mental difficulties you must

encounter, in order to enable you to win the scholarship founded for the benefit of those who are possessed of talent, but not of money."

After much thought, and various consultations with Mr. Hartley, Jack decidedly, and with deep gratitude to his benefactor, chose the grammar school.

Mr. Sutton was secretly glad, and Mr. Hartley thoroughly delighted, so great was his confidence in the lad.

His kind friends at the Hall took care to equip him respectably as a school-boy about to commence his new life at Stedwell Grammar School. His neighbors at Bushgrove all wished him well, and congratulated him on having such a friend in the 'squire, when he went about to say good-by the morning

he left. Mr. Hartley shook hands cordially with him.

“Go on as you have hitherto done, Jack,” said he. “Work steadily at Stedwell as you have here. You will find that there is much for you to accomplish in order to win the scholarship. Earnest application, and a resolve not to relax in your efforts, however great they may have to be, are indispensable. Having chosen the path of learning, go boldly forward in it; let no difficulties daunt you, no idleness ever overcome you, and then I shall be surprised if you do not come off victorious.”

“Good-by, Jack,” said the 'squire. “Conquer all your Stedwell difficulties as you have your Bushgrove ones, and I shall be quite satisfied.”

His last visit was to dear old Jenny.

“Good-by, dearie,” said she. “I’m not afearred for you. I don’t understand what this *scholar’s ship* is that I hear ’em say you will perhaps get, but I suppose it’s a vessel as brings money somehow. Anyhow, I know that the Lord will give all that’s good for you, if you go on fearing him and doing your best. You’ll find the truth of that more and more as you grow up. Perhaps,” added she, as she looked at Jack with tears in her eyes, — “perhaps you’ll live to be a great man some day, when old Jenny’s laid in her grave; but, if so, never forget ’twas the Lord who raised you, and who will care for you to the end, if you walk in his ways all the days of your life.”

XV.

Great changes related which years have effected. — Jack's subsequent history shows what may be effected by an "early resolve" to conquer difficulties.

WE must now pass over the space of twenty years, and once more pay a visit, although a flying one, to the village of Bushgrove.

That period has produced the usual amount of changes. Even the mountain cannot boast, like mountains in general, that on it time has produced little effect.

For twenty years' constant blasting and working have altered the form of its outline. Jack's cave has been reached and

blown away, the very stones of which it was formed being shipped to other parts.

Mrs. Naylor's hair has grown gray, and the lines of her face are deepening into old age; but she still lives in the same cottage, and her two children are comfortably settled near her.

Jenny Fowler rests peacefully in the church-yard. She lived to be upwards of eighty years old; but her last days were spent in comfort, and freedom from thought for the morrow; for there was one far away who ever retained the remembrance of how she had aided his childhood's struggles, and who claimed the right and privilege of providing for her old age.

The 'squire and his wife live on together at the Hall, though their children

are some married, some gone abroad. The good old gentleman may still be seen at times ascending the road to the quarries on horseback, generally with a grandson trotting by his side.

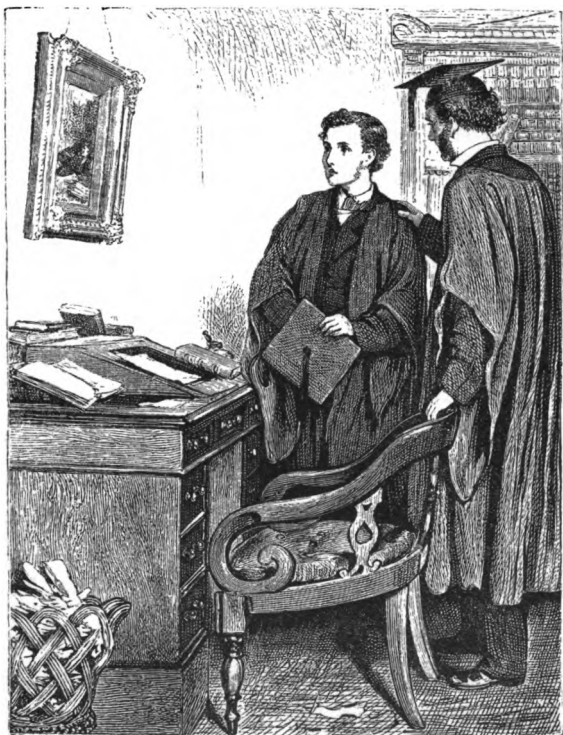
One other flight we would ask our readers to take with us to a far distant part of England, to the place where rise the time-worn and honored walls of — College.

It is summer time, and the sun shines cheerily on its darkened and dingy stones, and on those of the grand old minster by its side. Merry young voices ring through the play-ground, as they have done summer after summer for hundreds of years, during which time the college has sent

forth myriads of youthful spirits from its walls to fight the battle of life, some in one field, some in another.

This evening, two figures, each in cap and gown, are pacing up and down the cloisters. The countenance of the elder gentleman is strikingly expressive of intellect and benevolence, as he converses with the youth by his side. He is the master of one of the upper forms, and greatly beloved and respected by his pupils, by whom he is looked upon as friend as much as tutor.

The stripling who is his present companion is about to quit the college, so circumstanced that he will probably have to contend with considerable trials and difficulties; for his father has died lately, and



Jack as Tutor in a College.

the son must go forth and seek his fortunes as best he can.

His friend is advising and encouraging, and bidding him keep up a brave spirit and trust in God, and all will be well; but seeing that the young spirit is depressed and appalled with the rugged path before him, he determines to try another method of arousing him from despondency.

He takes him into his own sitting-room, a plainly-furnished apartment, filled with books and papers on every side.

That it is the abode of a man of learning may be seen at a glance; but there is nothing to attract the outward eye except one picture which hangs over the writing-table, and which is beautifully executed.

It represents a scene in the country,

consisting of trees and mountains, whilst in the foreground the artist has sketched the figure of a ragged boy lying on a green bank, apparently gazing up into the blue sky.

We need not tell the reader that we are once more in the company of his former acquaintance, whom we must no longer talk of as "Jack Harold," for he is the grave and dignified master of the upper fifth form in — College.

His career at Stedwell verified his friend's hopes. He won the scholarship and went to college, took high honors, and was consequently sought after as a tutor when he made teaching his profession. After a few years he was offered, and accepted, the mastership to which we have alluded.

A curious coincidence brought him into acquaintance with the artist who had sketched him in his childhood, and to whose few words of advice he owed his first resolve to cope with difficulties.

A pupil he was reading with in London requested him one day to accompany him to the studio of a well-known artist, to whom he was at the time sitting for his likeness.

The room was surrounded with pictures, but there was one before which Mr. Harold lingered so long, that it aroused the notice of Mr. R——, the artist, who remarked that that painting was one of his earliest productions.

“It possesses a great interest in my eyes,” replied his visitor, “for it represents

the place of my birth, and all my early associations."

"I remember being greatly delighted with Bushgrove and its neighborhood," remarked Mr. R——. "Although it is more than twenty-five years since I visited it, its beauty is fresh as ever in my recollection. I remember, too, being so much struck with a child's picturesque appearance as he lay on the bank, that I sketched him into my picture; and there you see the young urchin. I had scarcely finished him when he bounced up after a dragon-fly, which he chased like a regular madcap. The insect came in the nick of time, just as I had done with the lad; he chased and caught it, but I pleaded for its liberty and got it."

Mr. Harold started, and looked round with a keen and eager glance at Mr. R——. This, then, was the gentleman who had first fired him with a desire to raise his condition! — whose advice to conquer difficulties as he had conquered the dragon-fly, had started him on the path which had led him to attain his present important and dignified position!

He tried to recall his face; but in the gray hair before him he saw nothing to assist memory; and it was probable that, even had the change been not so great, his appearance had made less impression on him than his words at the time.

There could be no mistake, however, as to his identity. This was the stranger — the hero of his boyish imagination — who

had told him that "he, too, was a poor boy once."

The present was, however, not the moment for recognition. Mr. R—— was busy with the likeness he was taking, and it would be intrusive to explain then; so he turned again to the picture and looked at himself.

Yes, there he lay, just as he had so often as a child. He could recall the ragged old suit, and the tattered straw hat. He had been to Bushgrove since those early days, and had seen his old friends, and dear old Jenny, now gone to her rest; but even that visit had not revived childish remembrance as this picture now did.

He took a review of his past life as he stood before it with folded arms, and old

Jenny's parting words when he went to Stedwell came into his mind: —

“I know that the Lord will give all that's good for you, if you go on fearing him, and doing your best.”

The sitting was over, Mr. Harold lingered behind, and, when alone with Mr. R——, made himself known to him as the original of the urchin lying on the bank, — the hero of the dragon-fly chase.

The discovery delighted as much as it amazed Mr. R——; above all, when Mr. Harold told him how instrumental he had been in putting hope into his heart, which hope had led to action on his part.

He, too, had surmounted the difficulties of his lot when a boy; for though born in a higher class of life, he had been left an

orphan without means, except such as his own talents and perseverance placed in his power.

He had from an early age desired to become an artist, but the discouragements he met with whilst seeking to attain his object were sufficiently great to have daunted a less resolved and energetic nature. But, like Jack, he was not to be turned aside from what he aspired to. Each difficulty he overcame was to him but an incentive to perseverance, and the result had been that step by step he had advanced in the profession he had chosen, till he had risen almost to the head of it.

From this time a friendship grew up between these two men, and thus Mr. Harold became the possessor of the picture,

which we said he was about to show to the youth who was going forth to struggle with the world.

He told him the tale of his early life, and bade him gather up all his powers and never to despair of accomplishing anything he desired, if only he took in his hand the weapons of Faith, Energy, and Perseverance, with which to grapple at the difficulties that it is God's law shall meet man at every stage of his life.

And he repeated to him old Jenny's words, which had been to him as his life's motto : —

“I know that the Lord will give all that is good for you, if you fear him, and do your best.”



The Lost Found.

SYBIL

AND

HER LIVE SNOWBALL.

P R E F A C E.

It may increase the interest of the following little story if its young readers are informed that it is founded on fact.

During the period that various alterations were going forward in a church well known to the author, a certain pussy, tempted perhaps by curiosity, or more probably from the hope of finding mice, strayed into the sacred edifice.

Unseen by any one, she hid herself in a dark cavity underneath

one of the pews. The unconscious workmen replaced the boards; and it was not till the evening of the following day that her faint cries attracted notice, and she was released from her terrible situation and the fearful prospect of being buried alive.

But the writer seeks to do something more than merely amuse her little friends by the recital of pussy's adventure: she wishes to teach them the important truth that they, like Sybil, should turn to God, in trouble; for he who loves little children sympathizes with them even in their smallest joys and sorrows.

C. E. B.

CONTENTS.



I.

	PAGE
SYBIL LONGS FOR A LIVE PET.—MRS. JUDY'S OPINION OF THE MATTER.—THE IMPORTANT QUESTION OF ITS FUTURE NAME DISCUSSED.—SYBIL AND SNOW BECOME WARM FRIENDS,	7

II.

GREAT TROUBLE FOR SYBIL IN THE LOSS OF HER CAT.—TRAMPERS ARE SUSPECTED.—SYBIL IS INCONSOLABLE.—MR. MAUD TRIES TO COMFORT HER,	21
---	----

III.

SYBIL'S WALK THROUGH THE WOOD WITH MR. MAUD.—BETTY HENSMAN'S TRIALS RELATED.—SYBIL'S TEA AT THE VICARAGE,	37
---	----

I V.

SYBIL GOES TO THE CHURCH TO LOOK FOR HER BIBLE.—MAKES A MOST WONDERFUL DISCOVERY THERE.—SNOW IS FOUND BURIED ALIVE.—SHE IS DISINTERRED, AND GRADUALLY RECOVERS.—SYBIL IS QUITE HAPPY AGAIN,	50
---	----

SYBIL

AND HER LIVE SNOWBALL.



I.

Sybil longs for a live pet. — Mrs. Judy's opinion of the matter. — The important question of its future name discussed. — Sybil and Snow become warm friends.

I WISH I had a little brother or sister, Judy; how nice it would be!"

"No use wishing, Miss Sybil; it hasn't pleased God to give you either one or the other. Such things are not in our own power to manage."

"Well then, Judy, I will only wish I had a dear little cat or dog of my own to

play with me; that might be managed, you know."

"There's Lion for you, Miss Sybil, and Jet; why won't they do?"

"O Judy, they can't play. Why, Lion does nothing but sleep all day long, he is so fat and lazy; and as for Jet, she is good for nothing, except to sit in the chimney-corner, she is so old. I should like a young, dear little kitten, full of fun and tricks."

"One cat's enough in the house, I'm sure, Miss Sybil; so don't you fidget till you think you cannot do without another."

This conversation passed between a little girl of about seven years old and her maid, Judy, as she was called, though her real name was Judith.

Before we proceed further, we will tell our readers something about their history.

Sybil Temple was the only child of a gentleman who lived in a village, about seven miles' distance from a large town in which he held an appointment that took him away from home every morning, and prevented his returning till six o'clock in the evening. Sybil, therefore, saw very little of him, which was the more unfortunate, because her mother had died when she was three years old. He sometimes talked of sending her to school, but hitherto little Sybil had coaxed him out of the plan, for he really dreaded the thought of returning to his solitary home, without her bright, sunny face to welcome him. Moreover, there was a lady living in the village, who was willing

to let the little girl go to her, for an hour or two every day, to learn to read and write, etc., and Judy taught her to work with her needle; so Mr. Temple was tempted to keep her as long as possible at home, for he had great confidence in Judy's care of her.

Judy had been her nurse from the time she was born, and though she was now more of a house-keeper than anything else, she still watched over Sybil with the tenderest care, and tried, as far as she could, to supply the place of her mother.

Sybil had another friend also, who was extremely fond of her, and with whom she spent a great deal of her time. This was Mr. Maude, the Vicar of Wrenmore, as the village was called. He was getting quite

an old man, and as he had never been married, and had lived alone all his life, many wondered at his making such a companion of a mere child. But so it was. Nothing pleased him better than to see Sybil come running down the gravel walk in front of the vicarage. He would lay aside his book directly, and talk to her; or, if too busy to be disturbed, Sybil knew well in which cupboard she might look for some little books he kept there, on purpose for her amusement, and she would take one to the window-seat, and sit quietly till Mr. Maude had time to listen to her chatter, for no one had a busier tongue, when once it was set going.

The old gentleman had known her mother very well, and, when she was dying, he had

promised her to watch over her child, and instruct her in such things as had made Mrs. Temple happy even in that solemn hour.

It was a pretty and unusual sight to see the great friendship between the aged clergyman and this child. He often took her to walk with him to see his poor people, and, young as she was, she learned many useful lessons at these times, which were never afterwards forgotten.

Sybil had no companions of her own age, nor had she even any live pets, for Judy was not fond of them, and thought that the dog and black cat, which were both very old, were quite sufficient in the house. Fond as she was of Sybil, and anxious for her happiness, she was not at all disposed

to be over-indulgent, or to humor her in any whims, and unfortunately she considered her desire to have some animal to play with, in the light of a whim, and discouraged it, as we have seen.

But, one evening, when Mr. Temple came home, he carried a small basket in his hand, the cover of which was carefully tied down with a string. The care with which he placed it on the table aroused Sybil's curiosity directly, and her fingers trembled, with their eagerness to undo the fastening, when he told her it contained something alive, which was to be her own.

What was her delight, when, on raising the lid, she saw a most beautiful white kitten, of a foreign breed, with long, silky hair, fast asleep!

“There, Sybil,” said her father, “I have brought you a playfellow at last. I called this morning on a lady, who had a basket, lying on her rug, containing a cat and four kittens; and when I admired them, she asked if you would like one, and I said I thought there was no little girl in the world would value one more; so then she fetched this basket, and put some hay in it, and I brought pussy away, much to her own disgust, for she scratched and mewed till I was rather ashamed of my burden as I walked along the streets. When I got back to my office, I let her run about a little, and gave her some milk, but she would not be comforted, and kept on crying till about ten minutes ago, when she became quiet, being tired out, I suppose. I am not



Sybil, and her live Snowball.

sorry to give up the care of her to you, I assure you."

"O papa," exclaimed Sybil, "what a beauty it is! I did not know any cats had such soft long hair as this;" and she lifted out the little warm, sleepy animal, and hugged it in her bosom.

To rush to Judy, and show her treasure, was her first impulse, forgetting that the worthy woman would not be disposed to give it as cordial a welcome as herself. But even her admiration was excited by the unusual beauty of the kitten, which formed a great contrast to poor rusty-black old Jet, as the cat was called in consequence of its color.

"It is pretty enough, certainly, Miss Sybil," said she; "but what are we to do

with two cats in one house? and I'm not going to have old friends sent away for new ones."

"I do not want Jet to be sent away," said Sybil; "there is plenty of room for both. Jet can go on lying in the chimney-corner, and my dear little kitten will always be with me, you know."

Judy gave a sort of half consent, but added something, that Sybil did not choose to hear, about the parlor being no place for cats. The fact was, Judy loved Sybil so much that she was secretly glad her papa had brought her the kitten, but she did not care to seem as pleased as she really was.

Yet it was Judy who thought of the best name for her, when the important discussion of what it should be was going on.

Dozens had been mentioned between Sybil and her papa, as they sat at tea that evening, but not one that suited exactly, Sybil thought.

“Call her Snow, Miss,” replied Judy, when Sybil appealed to her on the subject, as she was carrying out the urn. “We named the other Jet because she was black; why not call this one Snow because she is white?”

“Oh, yes, Judy, that will do exactly. I wonder we did not think of it. She is just like a snowball when she is curled up asleep.”

From that day Snow became the constant companion and playfellow of our little heroine. She was a remarkably intelligent kitten, and more like a dog than a cat in

some of her ways. She followed her mistress all over the house and garden, and to the vicarage, where she was always a welcome guest, and allowed to take her place on the hearth-rug.

Sybil's great and only anxiety about her favorite was whilst she was at her daily lessons with Miss Maynard. She was not exactly afraid that Judy would be cross to her in her absence, but still she knew that she would give her a little slap, if she teased her by running off with her cotton or thimble. Nay, one day, when she had caught her with her spectacles in her mouth, she had not hesitated to give her a good downright beating. All things considered, Sybil wished she might take her with her.

At length she opened her mind to good-natured Miss Maynard, who at once promised that she might accompany her every day, provided she did not take off her attention from her lessons.

So from this time Snow trotted off after her little mistress to Miss Maynard's house, and it was amusing to see how daintily she picked her way, if the road happened to be dirty, evidently afraid of soiling her white feet. Sometimes she would stand still, and mew till she was carried; but it was not very often that her mistress would indulge her in this way, not only because she always had several books and a slate to carry, but also because Judy was sure to complain, when she did so, of the white hairs spoiling her cloth jacket.

Those children who have brothers and sisters of their own age to play with will perhaps scarcely be able to understand how completely Sybil made a companion of Snow, or how dearly she loved the little, playful creature, who, in her turn, clung to her mistress, and cared no more for old Jet than if she were not a cat like herself.

II.

Great trouble for Sybil in the loss of her cat. — Trampers are suspected. — Sybil is inconsolable. — Mr. Maude tries to comfort her.

AND now that our young readers know so much about Sybil and Snow, we must tell them of something that occurred when they had been together about four months.

One day Mr. Maude sat by his study window, with his Bible in his hand, waiting for the arrival of his little favorite ; for she was in the habit of going into the vicarage every morning, on her way to school, to wish him good-morning, and to

repeat two texts that she daily learned for him. He thought often of his promise to her dying mother. He taught her that, by nature, we are all sinful, and worthy of death, but that Jesus Christ died to save us, and that he dearly loves little children, when they try to please him.

Sybil had a loving heart, and when she listened to Mr. Maude's stories of our Saviour's gentleness and goodness, and of the way he was treated on earth, she would sometimes say, with tears shining in her large blue eyes, "I wish I had lived then, that I might have known Jesus, and have shown him how I loved him."

"And you may still know him, and show your love for him, my little girl," the old vicar would say. "Try and be an obe-

dient, holy child. Look up to God as the giver of all your happiness; and if he sees good to send you sorrow, still believe that he is your best friend. This is the way to know and love Jesus."

Little by little these lessons of the good clergyman had got Sybil quite into the habit of feeling that, although she could not see God, he was always watching over her, and guarding her with his love. On this particular morning, Mr. Maude sat at his window, as we have said, watching for his little friend and her kitten; but he waited and waited, and she did not come. He remembered that it was to be a holiday, and that she had been looking forward to staying longer with him than usual, so he was the more surprised. But the morning

passed away, and no Sybil and Snow appeared. Afraid she might be ill, Mr. Maude turned his steps to her house after dinner, and, opening the little garden gate, was crossing the lawn, when he heard low sobs near him, and, looking about to see from whence they proceeded, he saw Sybil lying under a drooping ash-tree, with her face buried in her hands.

He went hastily to her, and inquired into the cause of her grief; but his questions only brought fresh tears, and it was several minutes before he could gather from her that Snow had disappeared altogether since the previous day, and that her papa and Judy thought she had been stolen.

Mr. Maude felt very sorry for Sybil, for he knew that the loss of her cat was equal

to a far greater trouble with an older person.

Judy appearing at this moment, he obtained further particulars from her.

There had been a baptism in the church the day before, which Sybil had been anxious to witness, and, knowing that Snow must not accompany her, she left her in Judy's charge till she should be out of sight.

Judy kept watch over her till there was no longer any danger of her following Sybil, and then she suffered her to run away. Not long afterwards, she saw her sitting on the step of the front door, basking in the bright beams of an afternoon July sun. That was the last that was known of her. When Sybil returned, she

was missing. All search was fruitless, and there was every reason to fear that she had been stolen, for a party of trampers had passed through the village the day before, and had been begging at Mr. Temple's house just about the time that Snow had disappeared. Her foreign breed and unusual beauty of appearance might have made her an object of temptation to those who were probably not very particular as to their methods of turning a penny. Inquiries had been made in the village, but no one had seen her. All were inclined to suspect the trampers.

Mr. Maude was of the same opinion, for there had been certain depredations committed on his own chickens the previous day, which could only be attributed to strangers.

Poor Sybil was the last who would believe that she was really stolen.

She had clung, as long as possible, to the hope that she was somewhere about the house or grounds. She first searched for her in all likely places, and then commenced unlikely ones, not omitting to peep into the pots and pans, as they stood in a row on the kitchen shelf. Even her papa's boots did not escape her vigilance, and she opened and shut small drawers and boxes, in the vain hope that puss had squeezed herself into half her usual dimensions.

It was not till night that her hopes utterly failed; but when bedtime came, and she looked at Snow's empty basket, and thought of the uncertainty, and perhaps misery, of her present condition (for her

imagination conjured up all sorts of cruelties she would undergo from the trampers), she could hold up no longer, but burst into an agony of grief. In vain her papa promised to try and procure her another Snow, as white and silky as the lost one, should she not return. In vain Judy told her it was no use taking "on so about a dumb animal that did not know right from wrong, and therefore ought not be mourned after as if she had been a human being." Sybil only pettishly declared she cared for her far more than if she had been a human being; and she begged her papa not to talk any more about bringing her another cat, for she should never care about any other as long as she lived. She cried herself to sleep that night, and looked so ill the next

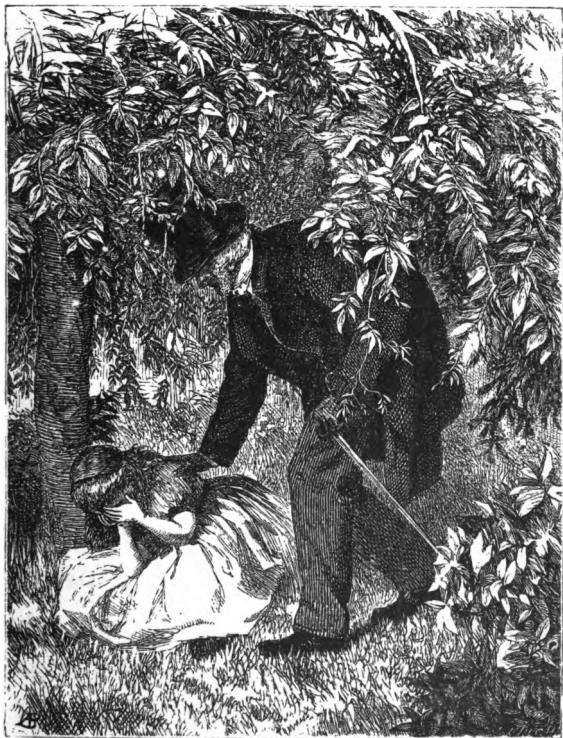
morning that Judy was glad it was a holiday, and she was not obliged to attend to lessons. Poor Sybil! it was a melancholy holiday for her. She would rather have done the hardest sum in long multiplication, with Snow by her side, than have a week's play without her. She did not care even to go to Mr. Maude; she preferred sauntering about the garden all the morning, thinking of her trouble; and when Judy called her to dinner, she could scarcely be persuaded to eat anything.

Judy was really very sorry for her; but she thought it would only make her worse if she told her so, and the good woman followed another plan altogether. She tried the system of gently scolding her for "making such a fuss," as she said, and de-

clared it was enough to make God send her some real sorrow, in order to show her what sorrow really was.

Judy did not mean to be unkind; but she did not understand children much, or she would have known that such trials as Sybil's, though small compared to those which follow in after life, are very great to a young heart which has had nothing to bear as yet.

Her words only made Sybil think her cross and unfeeling, and put her rather out of temper; and the moment she could get away, she went into the garden again, and, creeping under the long, drooping arms of the ash-tree, where Judy was not likely to see her, she gave way to a fresh, passionate burst of tears, in the midst of which



Sybil's grief at the loss of her pet.

Mr. Maude found her, as we have seen.

He was silent for a minute or two. On hearing all that Judy told him about Sybil's great distress, some such thoughts as these passed through his mind:—

“If this little girl cannot bear troubles better than this when she grows up, she will be a very unhappy woman, for life is full of sorrows.”

He did not think it wise to try and comfort her with holding out much hope of Snow's return, for he did not expect it. He was anxious rather to teach her how to bear loss more bravely, and to turn her attention to other things. At length he said:—

“Sybil, do you know that nothing

pleasant or sad can happen to us without God's leave? When he sends us joy we must thank him for it; and when he brings us trouble, we should ask him to help us to bear it patiently."

"But," said Sybil, "God has not taken away Snow; it was those wicked beggars."

"We do not know for certain where she is," replied Mr. Maude; "but you may be sure that he knows the smallest thing that happens to us, and that you can neither lose nor find your cat without his consent."

"But do you think God cares about such little things as happen to me?" asked Sybil.

"I am quite sure he does, my child. He has told us in his Bible that even the

sparrows are cared for by him. He loves you dearly, yet he suffers this trial to come to you; therefore you may know that in some way he intends it for your good."

Sybil looked up at Mr. Maude in surprise, and as if she could not understand his meaning.

"I will try and explain myself to you," he said. "You know that your papa talks of sending you to school to be educated, and the reason is, that it is necessary you should learn all such things as will be useful to you when you grow up. Childhood and youth are the seasons for what is called education. Now, in just the same way our heavenly Father teaches his little ones such lessons whilst they are young as shall fit them for others much harder when they

are men and women. I have often told you that sin has brought sorrow into the world, and that it must be the lot of all, more or less. Your father had it fall on him in a very severe manner when he lost your sweet mother, who was dearer to him than all the world besides; and you, Sybil, must not hope to escape what is the general lot of all. It may seem hard to you to believe it now, but it is by such smaller misfortunes as this you are now grieving over, that God intends to prepare you gradually for others hereafter; and, just as you learn to bear them meekly or impatiently, you will be happy or miserable through life."

Sybil perfectly understood Mr. Maude now, and, after a moment's pause, she said: —

“I will try and bear the trouble better. I did not think about God sending it. Will you ask him to make me try and do without Snow, if he wishes me not to have her?”

“We will both ask him, dear child; he will hear your prayer as readily as mine. Nothing pleases him more than when his little children tell him everything.”

“Then may I ask him to bring me back Snow?” asked Sybil, timidly, her heart still clinging to the lost pet.

“You may do so if you first try and resolve to be patient and submissive should he not see good to answer your prayer,” replied Mr. Maude; “but for this, too, you must ask his help, for we can do nothing of ourselves.”

“And now,” said Mr. Maude, “shall we

take a walk together through Friar's Wood? I shall be glad to go and see Betsy Hensman, who lives at the other end of it, and I should like you to know her, for she is a great favorite of mine."

This was a delightful proposal to Sybil, who ran in to ask Judy's leave, and was ready in three minutes.

III.

Sybil's walk through the wood with Mr. Maude. — Betty Hensman's trials related. — Sybil's tea at the vicarage.

THERE was nothing in the world she enjoyed like one of these walks, for Mr. Maude had a delightful way of his own in amusing children. He was one of those people who, with much learning and fondness for deep reading, contrive to keep quite fresh and simple in character even into old age ; and this was doubtless the reason why he and Sybil Temple understood each other so well. It was a lovely afternoon. The heat of the day was still great, but the road to Friar's Wood lay through shade nearly the

whole way. First they had to walk through a lane whose tall hedges were filled with wild roses and eglantine, and on either side of the road there was a wide slip of green grass, which was soft and pleasant to the feet. After walking along this for some time, they came to a gate in the hedge with a stile by the side of it, and over this lay their way. It took them into a beautiful wood, through which a path had been cleared amongst the low brushwood, so that they could walk with ease, though they had to go one behind the other. There were many large trees in which the wood-pigeons had built their nests, and their soft gentle cooing delighted Sybil and her friend, and they sometimes stood still to listen to them.

There was another sound, too, which was

very delicious on a hot summer day. This was the murmuring of the river Ouse, running just below this wood, and which, in fact, might be called one of its banks. For some time it was not visible because of the brushwood, but at length they came suddenly on an open spot where it was all cleared away, and there was a large space covered with soft mossy grass and bluebells. Mr. Maude proposed that they should sit down and rest on a fallen tree; and as Sybil untied her hat and laid it beside her, she thought there could be no spot in all the world so beautiful. The green space they had chosen for their seat sloped down to the edge of the noble river below, and the branches of the forest-trees which grew on the slope intertwined their branches, form-

ing a natural canopy over their heads. They remained till Mr. Maude remembered that they had yet some distance to go ; so they pursued their walk till they again crossed a stile leading back into the lane, and close by was a cluster of cottages, the smallest and humblest of which was Betsy Hensman's, whom they were going to see.

As they had walked along, Mr. Maude had told Sybil her history.

She was the wife of a laboring man, employed by the 'squire, whose house was not far distant on the opposite side of the river, and, as it was wide here, and the bridge a good way off, a boat was kept close by, in a boat-house, for the use of the Hall people, and of the laboring men who lived in these cottages.

“Three years ago,” said Mr. Maude, “Betsy Hensman and her husband had two of the finest little boys that parents could boast of. But a sad accident happened.

“They were high-spirited children of about nine and ten years of age, and, young as they were, they were quite accustomed to cross backwards and forwards on the river in the boat by themselves, often taking their father’s dinner to him when he was very busy.

“One day their mother had gone into the village to make some purchases. Her boys were playing in the wood near the cottage when she left, as was their habit for hours together, and she went without anxiety, saying she should be at home by tea-time. As she was returning, she heard

loud cries as from children in distress, and the sound seemed to proceed from the river. The next moment she came in sight of a boat with one boy in it, trying to pull up another who was struggling in the water. They were her own children; and at the very instant she recognized them, the one in the boat lost his balance and fell over. It was a dreadful moment for the poor mother, who could render no assistance. Her screams brought a woodman to her side, who instantly sprang down the bank, and plunged into the river. He was a capital swimmer, fortunately, and strong enough to force his way against the stream, which is very strong in that place. He managed to save the elder lad, but the other was dead before he could get him on shore."

“How dreadful!” exclaimed Sybil, shuddering; “then poor Betsy has but one boy now?”

“Yes,” replied Mr. Maude; “and he is likely to be a cripple; for somehow his spine got a twist, either as he fell out of the boat, or as he was got out of the water. It was not noticed much at first, though he complained of pain; but, little by little, it grew worse, till at last they took him to an infirmary, and it was found that the injury was very serious, and he has to lie constantly on his back, and will probably have to do so for years. Poor fellows! they paid dearly for their imprudence in getting out the boat, and rowing it down the river to gather water-lilies, for it was thus that the accident happened.”

“ We were talking this morning, Sybil,” continued Mr. Maude, “ of childhood’s sorrows being a preparation for greater ones. This sad affliction of the Hensmans is one of life’s large troubles, by the side of which such a one as the loss of Snow becomes small, — does it not? ”

At this moment they reached the cottage door. Mr. Maude’s story had given a great interest to this family in Sybil’s eyes. A tidy, clean-looking woman received them in a humble but neatly arranged room.

On a rudely contrived couch lay a delicate-looking lad of about twelve years old, reading.

It seemed dreadful to Sybil to have to lie there perhaps for years, as she had been told he must do ; yet the boy appeared con-

tented and cheerful, and his mother spoke gratefully of their many mercies.

“I have been telling this little girl,” said the clergyman, after a time, “of the sad trial that befell you three years ago. I have brought her with me to-day because I want her to see how happy they can be under affliction who have learned that God sends it in love to teach us lessons that must be learned. My little friend here is in some trouble at present, and I think it will help her to bear her smaller sorrow to see that others have much more serious ones to endure.”

Betsy Hensman looked kindly at Sybil. She was a good woman, one of whom Mr. Maude thought almost more highly than of anybody else in his parish. He had known

her from a child, and she had lived for some years in his house as a servant. He had purposely brought Sybil to see her to-day, because he knew that her cheerful temper and meek resignation to God's will would be a better lesson than any words could impart.

"Little miss does not look as if she knew much about trouble," said she; and she inwardly compared her rosy cheeks and plump, thriving appearance with that of her own pale, slender lad, whose want of exercise and constant lying in one attitude had greatly affected his health and looks.

"And yet," she added, "little things try young folks who haven't got enough sense, as it were, to bear them; but my boy there knows that the best way is to be



Betty Bensman's Trials

patient, and believe, as you have often told him, sir, that everything, small and great, is in the hands of God, and that nothing can happen without his leave. That thought has done more for us than anything else since our great misfortune."

During their walk home, Mr. Maude and Sybil talked a good deal about the Hensmans, and Sybil said she should like to go back again, and take the poor boy some books. She was almost as cheerful as ever when she entered the vicarage garden; for as her papa was not coming home till late this evening, she was to have tea with Mr. Maude, whose house-keeper, knowing she was coming, took care to make some of the cakes Sybil liked best.

Being Saturday evening, Mr. Maude had

to look over his sermons for the next day, and she left directly after tea, for she, too, had some preparations to make. She always read her Sabbath-school lesson on Saturday night, as she had to repeat it before breakfast to her papa.

She had enjoyed her walk so much that her mind had been quite diverted from her loss; but when she entered the garden-gate the thought of it rushed on her more sadly than ever. The garden looked lonely without either her papa or Snow, and she felt inclined to give way to her tears and lamentations afresh.

But then she remembered all that Mr. Maude had said to her, and she thought now would be the time to pray to God to help her to be submissive. So she went to

her favorite place under the drooping ash, and, concealed by its long branches, she knelt down, and asked to be made patient and contented without her little favorite; but she also begged God to send it back again, if he were willing she should have it once more.

Then she came out from under the ash-tree, looking quite calm; and she spoke so cheerfully to Judy a few minutes afterward, that, when she left her, she exclaimed to one of the other maids, "Well, to be sure! what a way Mr. Maude has with that child. Her heart was just breaking over the loss of her cat, when he came and fetched her away, and now he has sent her back looking and speaking quite like herself again."

IV.

Sybil goes to the church to look for her Bible. — Makes a most wonderful discovery there. — Snow is found buried alive. — She is disinterred, and gradually recovers. — Sybil is quite happy again.

WHEN Sybil went to fetch her Bible to look out the Sabbath-school lesson, she could not find it, and after a few minutes' hunt, she remembered she had left it in the church on the previous Sunday, so she ran back to Judy, to ask if she might run and fetch it, for the door was sure to be open, as James Harley, the old sexton, always dusted and prepared the church for the next day on Saturday evening. It was not above five

minutes' walk. She found the sexton there, as she expected, and he looked rather surprised at seeing Sybil; but he was very deaf, so she merely nodded to him, and passed on to her pew to fetch the book.

What was the old man's amazement when, a moment after, she flew up to him, as he was shaking a cushion, and, seizing him by the arm, shouted something in his ear in such an excited manner that he thought she must be gone mad. "James, James," she exclaimed, "come quick to the 'squire's pew, and pull up the boards. My cat is underneath."

"What does missy say?" said he, putting up his hand to his ear as he let the cushion fall from it, but not stirring one inch.

“Oh, come, please come,” she repeated.
“Snow is under the ground there. I hear her crying quite plainly.”

“Snow on the ground at midsummer, do you say?” replied old James, catching but one or two of her words. “Why, little miss, you must think I am growing foolish in my old age, to come to me with such a pack of nonsense as that;” and he took up his cushion again, and began to beat and shake it in a manner that showed he was rather offended. Sybil left him as an arrow flies from a bow and ran home speedily. Two minutes later she rushed into the room where Judy was busy putting away linen.

“Judy, Judy, I have found Snow. She is in the church, under the 'squire's pew,

quite in the ground, and she must be dying. Oh, how can we get her up ? ”

Sybil's first words had made Judy drop a sheet from her hand as suddenly as the sexton had dropped the cushion, and her face had lighted up with pleasure ; but when she heard *where* Sybil supposed she was, she quietly took up the sheet, and turned to her linen cupboard again, saying, “ Now, Miss Sybil, don't you come here talking such nonsense as that. Just as if there's the cat that was ever born who would go off and bury itself in a church.”

Poor Sybil saw she could get no more help from Judy than from the sexton. Off she darted again, out of the house, through the garden, down the road, till she reached the vicarage. Mr. Maude was in his study,

bending over his sermon, when Sybil rushed through the glass door, and stood by his side, too breathless to articulate a syllable.

The old gentleman took off his spectacles, and looked at her with astonishment.

At length she found breath to make the same announcement that she had previously done, though in vain, to the sexton and Judy.

“*Indeed* Snow is there, Mr. Maude,” she said, “yet nobody will believe me. I knew her voice directly, although it was so faint and weak. She will die, because no one will help me to pull up the boards.”

“But tell me what took you to the church, and more about it,” said Mr. Maude, who was inclined to be somewhat incredulous also, and to think that his little

friend's anxiety about her pet had caused her imagination to mislead her in the matter.

“I was going to look out the Sabbath-school lesson for to-morrow, when I left you,” replied Sybil, “and I could not find my Bible. Then I recollected I had left it in the pew last Sunday; so Judy told me I might go and fetch it. James Harley was there, dusting the pews. I went, and found my Bible, and was just coming away, when I heard a little faint noise, which seemed to come from the 'squire's pew, next to ours. I listened, and in a minute it came again, and I was sure it was the mew of a cat. I flew into the pew, and hunted all about, underneath the seats and behind the hassocks; but there was nothing. The cry

came again and again though, and it seemed to be from under the floor. I pulled up the carpet and laid my ear down to the ground just on the place where the sound was, and then I knew Snow's voice directly. I called to her, and I think she heard me, for the mews came quicker; but they were so weak that I know she must be nearly dead!" And so saying, the excited child burst into tears.

Mr. Maude rose hastily, looking round for his hat, which Sybil placed in his hand in an instant. He began to give credit to her tale; for he remembered that the 'squire's pew had been undergoing alterations during the past week. Being found damp, the flags had been removed, a space hollowed out underneath, and boards placed

instead of the flags. The workmen had been engaged thus for several days, and it seemed to be by no means impossible that Snow might have followed Sybil to the church when she went to the christening, and had somehow got enclosed in the space under the new boards.

It was the more likely because the workmen had left their work during the short time that the christening had occupied, and he remembered that there were then but two or three boards left to be laid down, which were fitted in immediately after their return. A cat might easily have escaped their notice, if she were in a corner underneath part of the flooring. They had finished their work that evening, and left the pew ready for the sexton to clean. This he had done ;

but his deafness had doubtless prevented his hearing the cries which had so quickly attracted Sybil's ears. All this passed through Mr. Maude's mind in a shorter time than it took him to step from his study window into the garden, and it made him anxious not to lose an instant in fetching Tom Morris, the village carpenter, to take up the boards.

Quickly as he walked, his steps seemed sadly slow to Sybil, who flew on in front, and kept running back again, as if, by so doing, she could hurry his movements.

When they got to Morris's cottage poor Sybil's patience had again to be tried. His wife was there, preparing his supper; but he himself had not yet come in from his work at the Hall, which was half a mile

distant; and his son, who worked under him, was there likewise.

"They are sure to be here directly, miss," said Mrs. Morris, feeling for Sybil when she heard why they were wanted. "My good man is as punctual as the church clock, unless he be kept for something particular by the 'squire himself."

"But if he should be kept my cat will die," exclaimed Sybil, in a voice almost of agony.

"Cats live longer than you would think," replied Mrs. Morris; "and this one hasn't been buried long enough to be starved yet; so don't fret yourself in that way, little miss. You'll make yourself quite ill."

Mrs. Morris stepped to the gate to look up the road in the direction of the Hall, and

Mr. Maude took the opportunity of saying to Sybil : —

“God’s little children must learn to be patient, you know, my child. Try and believe that he is caring for you even now.”

His words had an immediate effect in calming the little girl, who had not forgotten their former conversation ; but it was a relief to both her and Mr. Maude when Mrs. Morris came running in to say her husband and son were in sight.

They were quite willing to postpone their supper, although very tired, and hasten to the church with the necessary tools. Mrs. Morris’s little boy, Charlie, had been in the cottage when Mr. Maude and Sybil entered, and had listened with boyish eagerness to

what they had said, and, in consequence, the story had spread to a number of other children, who were all interested in the affair; for Snow was an object of universal admiration amongst them. A little crowd of village urchins were collected round the gate, and ran after them to the church; hoping to get a peep of what was going on, either through doors or windows. But, on reaching the church-yard, Mr. Maude shut the gate too decidedly for them to dare to follow further, knowing how particular he was about all sacred places.

Old Harley was still busy in the church, and stared in amazement at the entrance of the party. But when he saw the 'squire's pew again dismantled of the carpet and hassocks he had somewhat angrily replaced

after Sybil's disarrangement, he was thoroughly offended, and would have marched out of the church in dudgeon, if Mr. Maude had not taken the trouble to shout the reason of what they were doing into his ear. Even then he was disposed to look upon them all as fairly gone out of their senses, to think a cat should be found in "such an outlandish place as that." He saw now, he said, what Miss Sybil meant when she told him that Snow was lying there; but, for his part, he should as soon expect to find real winter's snow under the 'squire's pew as a living cat; but, if they would pull the place to pieces, why it was no concern of his, so long as they did it up again, and put the carpet and hassocks right; for he wasn't a-going to do it a third time. Old Harley

was a noted grumbler, and an irritable old man, though a worthy one in many respects; so nobody thought much of his words. Indeed, every one was too intent on the result of the carpenter's exertions. At first all was quiet under the pew; and, to Sybil's dismay, Morris remarked to Mr. Maude, that perhaps little miss was mistaken after all, and, if so, it would be a pity to disturb the boards just as they were finished.

In an agony of terror, lest Mr. Maude should be of the same mind, Sybil threw herself on the ground before he could answer, and called, "Snow, Snow," in the same silvery, child-like tones to which the little animal had so often replied by bounding on her lap or shoulder.

What was her joy when a gentle mew

came from the old corner, faint, indeed, but loud enough to be heard by the carpenter, who instantly seized his tools, and began vigorously to commence operations on the board immediately above the spot whence the sound proceeded. A few minutes sufficed to raise it and the adjoining one ; and, with a scream of joy, Sybil's keen eye detected a little white bundle of fur lying beneath, which moved and uncurled itself as the light and fresh air came on it. It was indeed poor Snow, in a state of half-starvation, too weak to stand on her legs. but still able to recognize her young mistress, as she received her tenderly into her arms. All sympathized with Sybil's happiness. Even old James Harley, who had kept aloof, with an air of slight contempt

exclaimed, "Well, to be sure! if missy hasn't been right after all, and found her Snowball in a queer place enough!"

Sybil was eager to run home to give poor puss some milk; but she could not help stopping a moment at the church-yard gate, to show her to the children, who pressed forward to peep, and then set up a loud hurrah, at a hint given by a merry little fellow, who dearly loved the sound of his own lungs. In fact, Snow had become a heroine. Judy held up her hands with amazement when Sybil rushed into the kitchen, with her white bundle in her arms, to ask the cook for some milk.

"She was there, Judy," said Sybil, "just as I said. You wouldn't believe me, but I was right."

“What do you mean by there, Miss Sybil?” asked Judy. “You don’t mean that Snow had got so tired of being alive, that she went and dug a hole, and buried herself under the ’squire’s pew?”

“No,” said Sybil, laughing; “but she got into a hole there by mistake, and the men covered her over, and she is nearly starved.”

Some milk, judiciously administered in small quantities, soon had the effect of reviving Snow, who, after a time, began to try and use her legs a little, purr, wash her face, and finally, curling herself into a ball in her basket, went into a sound sleep, and did not wake up even when Sybil joyfully exhibited her to her papa on his return. The next evening, after tea, she went to the

vicarage with a message from her papa to Mr. Maude. Snow was able to follow her as usual, though with somewhat slower and more sedate steps; for she was still feeling weak from the effects of her recent imprisonment. The clergyman was resting in his easy-chair after the day's labor; but he was pleased to see his visitors enter, and told Sybil to sit down by him on her accustomed low stool.

“I was just thinking of you, my child,” said he. “I am glad your trial about Snow has ended so happily. Yesterday we talked about trying to be patient and submissive when in sorrow; to-day we have to speak of gratitude and thankfulness because of its removal.”

Then Sybil told Mr. Maude how she had

felt comforted by praying under the ash-tree, and she said she had not forgotten to thank God for making her so happy again.

“Try and look upon him as your friend more and more,” replied Mr. Maude; “go to him in all your griefs, whatever they may be; and, though they may not always end so happily as this has done, you may feel sure that his love for you will always order everything for the best.”

Three years passed away after this incident had happened to Sybil Temple, and then she was called on to experience a far heavier trial, while yet still in her childhood, in the loss of her revered and much-loved friend, Mr. Maude.

His health failed gradually for a year, and he was obliged to give the charge of

his flock chiefly into other hands. But, during this time, Sybil was his constant companion; and the lessons she learned from his conversations and dying instructions were such as she never forgot.

He was buried not far from the spot where Snow had been covered over by the boards; and Sybil wept bitterly as she remembered that this sorrow could not pass away as that had done.

But her papa reminded her that her beloved Mr. Maude was not laid there forever; that the day would come when he would rise again to be reunited with those he had loved on earth; and that, instead of sorrowing over his loss, she must try and cling yet closer to that heavenly Friend who could never die, and who, Mr. Maude had so

early taught her, would sympathize with all her joys and sorrows as none other could do.

Good old Mr. Maude, and the white cat and its curious adventure are now but the reminiscences of a distant childhood; yet the lesson learned on that occasion has often helped Sybil in after years; and she has written this little story in the hope that it may persuade any little ones who read it to begin early, and take all their troubles to God; for there is not one too trifling for his notice and sympathy.

